

where'd all the time go?

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where'd all the time go?

by [heartsighss](#)

Summary

It's four am when George gets the text.

He's confused at first, although maybe it's the sleep deprivation that makes him slow to the punch. Either way, George blinks blearily at his phone screen in confusion for way too long.

Or, Dream arrives in London, George isn't prepared in the slightest.

where'd all the time go?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

It's four am when George gets the text.

Dream's lucky that he's been awake for hours, struggling to finish editing a video with too many visual glitches and audio malfunctions for one man to deal with. And George isn't exactly known for having the patience of a saint when it comes to shit like this. He really needs to hire an editor.

He's confused at first, although maybe it's the sleep deprivation making him slow to the punch. Either way, George blinks bleary-eyed at his phone in confusion.

DREAM

Come pick me up from the airport.

George sits back in his chair, sparing a glance at the line of energy drinks on his desk and wondering if they can induce hallucinations through text messages. He stares long enough that another message comes through.

DREAM

London's warmer than I thought it was going to be.

That's because despite what Dream lets himself believe, London isn't the fucking Antarctic. George is too confused to reply with anything quite as snarky, however.

He settles on three urgent question marks.

George is beginning to think sometime between getting up in the morning (*1 pm*) and editing all day (*laying in bed for hours after waking and sitting in a Discord call with Quackity before remembering he's supposed to have a video coming out tomorrow*) that he has blacked out some sort of conversation in which Dream decided to come to London.

There was no such conversation over the last few days, none because they're supposed to be waiting for George to get his VISA for America, not Dream in London. That's... that just isn't a thing they've considered.

If such a conversation has occurred, somehow, without George noticing, he'd like to rewind for a moment and take a breather. Jam his finger on the space bar and pause, because what?

If Dream is telling the truth then what the fuck, if this is another one of Dream's hit-miss bizarre jokes then he's definitely making George look like an idiot for believing it.

DREAM

Pick me up from the airport!!

Dream texts the same thing again instead of elaborating. Instead of maybe explaining to his best friend what is going on. Because that would be the sensible, normal thing to do and Dream is clearly anything but sensible or normal.

George huffs and presses his hands to his eyes for a long beat, hoping he can wipe his lethargy away.

The problem is that George has never even seen Dream before. The problem is that they have a plan, already in motion to get George to Dream and Dream to George. The problem is that George has a video to edit, he hasn't tidied his flat. That Dream isn't supposed to come to him. The problem is they're waiting, or they're supposed to be. Patiently waiting, George in London and Dream in Orlando. Opposite sides of the Atlantic.

So how is he supposed to believe that Dream is in London, at the airport, waiting for George to pick him up?

GEORGE

Is this a prank?? If yes it's a really shit one

GEORGE

It's 4 am

DREAM

You answered, didn't you?

God, he can practically hear Dream's cocky tone. George sighs, resigned to his fate.

GEORGE

Just tell me what's going on NOW!!

For a moment, the text bubble dots pop up, as Dream types out a reply. Whatever it is, it seems to be taking him forever. George squints, then sighs. Eventually, the bubble disappears entirely and he's left staring in anticipation until his screen darkens and his vision goes blurry.

His phone vibrates to life as a call comes through, he fumbles, phone loose in his grip as he hits the accept button with clumsy fingers.

The call hasn't even properly connected and George is already babbling down the line. " Dream what the fuck do you mean you're at the airport? You can't just message that at four am! Four in the morning, Dream. I could have been asleep and missed it and you would be stranded—"

He can hear Dream laughing on the other end while he rambles, a rolling baritone broken by breathless squeaks that usually gets George cracking up too. Only this time he's not in on the joke.

"—Even worse, if you're lying and I'm just having a heart attack for no reason then you're actually dead to me. It's four in the morning!"

Dream is still laughing.

"This isn't funny." George runs his fingers through the knots in his hair.

"George." An amused tone rolls down the line, entertained by George's exasperation.

"Dream." He grimaces, so done with this already.

"Please come pick me up from the airport. I'm not lying to you. Listen, I can prove it!"

There's a moment where George doesn't hear much of anything, then a muffled (but distinctly British) intercom voice calls: *'Final boarding for flight GLT564 to Amsterdam—'*

The other shoe drops. In his chair, George's posture straightens out from its slump.

Dream is telling the truth. He's in London, in the flesh. Waiting for George to pick him up.

A strangled noise of frustration escapes him, and a hand rakes through his hair again.

Unfinished on his PC, his video is already forgotten. To be continued, sometime, probably...

"Are you coming?" Dream asks, tone annoyingly amused.

George's eyes roll, stuck between wanting to rush to the airport to either punch Dream or hug him. He can probably do both.

"Yes, of course I'm coming. I- Dream. I don't even know which airport you're at." George switches the phone to speaker, standing from his chair to stretch his aching back. It's been too long since he last stood, he goes a little dizzy, vision-spotting.

He squeezes his eyes shut so he doesn't fall back into his chair.

"Uh..." Dream trails off in response.

"Are you serious?" George's eyes snap open. "You don't know which airport you're at?"

"... I forgot."

George sighs. "You are serious."

"Whatever, if I know I was going to be bullied I would've asked someone else to pick me up." There's a smile in his voice, in the lilt of his words as they hit George's ears. A smile he has never seen, that he wasn't supposed to for months yet.

"Like who?"

"Your mom." Dream mutters. Further proof that he has the sense of humour of a thirteen-year-old. One he probably never grew out of being.

"You're the worst. I'm hanging up, actually. You can find your own way."

"No, wait!" Dream chokes down his laughter. "I'm looking for a sign, one minute."

In the time it takes Dream to find where in the world he is, George manages to cross the room and grab the first pair of shoes he can find - a battered pair of black trainers he never usually wears.

He slides back into his chair to pull them on, wheels rolling him back an inch with the force of his movement.

"Heathrow! I'm at Heathrow Airport!" Dream exclaims as George's first shoe has been toed on.

Okay." George picks the phone up. "Hold on. I'm on my way."

"Holding on!" Dream sings and George ends the call. Hastily, he pulls on his other shoe, lacing it quick as he can.

He darts to his wardrobe, grabbing the first coat his hand lands on, a denim jacket left behind by Wilbur on a past visit that George has quietly claimed as his own. It's too big over a t-shirt but fits well enough over the hoodie George already wears.

He grabs his keys, scratches his cat behind the ears as an apology for his hurried leave and escapes his flat as quick as he can.

George's thoughts are occupied by the surreality of all this. Fifty per cent sure this is some very elaborate and convoluted prank, to what end George does not know. Either way, overwhelming anticipation floods him. He's about to meet Dream, to see him for the first time ever.

He heads down the high street, conflicted.

Because no one hops on a ten-hour flight on a whim, not Dream whom he has sat in calls talking for hours about their plans for George to get his VISA to America.

This is not the plan, so far from it that George doesn't know what to think. A little pissed off that Dream would do something like this without talking about it. Sure, Dream's impulsive, he often jumps the gun before his brain can catch up. But this is something else entirely, a whole new level of impulsivity that makes George nervous.

He wonders if Sapnap knows about any of this. If this has been some long-kept secret to kamikaze surprise attack George's life and turn it upside down.

George comes to the conclusion that Dream is probably the only person in the world dumb enough to do something like this.

He'll have to get the train to Heathrow, George decides. Doesn't want to wait around for an Uber or taxi when he could be on the move. Luckily, there's an Underground station close to his flat. With Google maps pulled up on his phone he checks which line he needs to get on, beeling it down the darkened high street. There's a change he'll have to make, to get onto the Piccadilly line to Heathrow. Already time stretches ahead of him.

Dream is waiting, George can't get there quick enough.

Reaching the station, George hurries inside, down the stairs and past the ticket barrier, phone clutched in hand to get him through the ticket barrier.

Further, he goes, into the underbelly of the city.

He comes to a standstill on the platform, the next carriage three minutes away. The air down here is heavy, it gets even worse at the peak of summer when it seems to stifle you completely, hot air with nowhere to go, the only breeze coming from trains cycling through, pushing the air along the tracks.

He feels the seconds tick on, a slow drag. Amped when he hears the screech of braking wheels on train tracks, annoyed when he realises it's the platform over, a train heading in the opposite direction of where he needs to be.

When it does come, brakes screeching louder in his ears than before, people move around him, readying to board.

He thinks about timing, about waiting and praying, pleading that his VISA would get accepted sooner, get him to Orlando and Dream quicker. And yet... and now time has caught up with him, pushed into motion out of his control. Dream has taken time and made it his own. Made it theirs to conquer.

The carriage is partially full, people corralling overnight bags and large, bulging suitcases that George has to step around. He takes an empty seat, the train falls into motion around him.

There's no service down here, under the city. Nothing to do to occupy himself other than to stare into space, stare at the texts from Dream as though they will disappear if he glances away from them.

A leg-bouncing, hand-sweating, heart-racing forty-four and a half minutes later he arrives at Heathrow.

Phone still in hand, he swipes and taps his mobile data on and off a couple of times, hoping it will miraculously give him back his lost service.

It connects, finally, a string of texts light up his notifications seconds after. All of them Dream, all of them as annoying and impatient as George could have expected.

DREAM

Hurry up, I'm so bored

DREAM

Have you fallen asleep?

DREAM

Are you dead?

DREAM

George, this is God speaking and I command you to rise from the dead to rescue your Very Best Friend from the PURGATORY that he is currently stuck in

DREAM

Think I'm going to be like that guy who lived in an airport for like twenty years

DREAM

Is everyone in England this mean??

DREAM

Bri-ish people be like, oi bruv wotch wer yer fookin goin mate and then like body slam you to the ground

DREAM

Duuuude are you here yet?

George replies quickly.

GEORGE

God speaking here, he says you're going to be stuck in hell forever for being so impatient

DREAM

Where are youuuuuuuuu????

As George finds his way towards the arrivals lounge at Heathrow airport, he realises something crucial.

He won't be able to recognise Dream in the crowds.

Stopping short, he blinks at the masses of people moving across his vision, narrowly avoiding a power-walking businessman in a three-piece suit with a glare to rival the sun's. Maybe Dream was

right about the British people being rude thing. Though maybe that's just Londoners.

Looking around for anyone else who might want to walk into him, George calls Dream.

"Are you here yet?" The words are out of Dream's mouth before he can get a word in edgeways.

"Yes—"

"Took you long enough! I could've flown to Florida and back in the time I've waited."

"Will you— I will leave you here if you don't shut up."

Dream chuckles.

"I realised something vital."

"Vital?"

"Yeah, I don't even know what you look like Dream! You're going to have to come and find me."

"Which one do you want me to do first?"

There's a beat of silence. George squints, already expecting a punchline. "What?"

"Come or find you?"

"You're disgusting." He's not sure he sounds as resigned as he wants to, it was pretty funny. "That's the final straw, I'm leaving you here. Bye Dream...." George pulls the phone slowly from his face.

"No!" he hears Dream shout.

He hears Dream.

A yell heard loud enough it definitely wasn't through the speaker of George's phone. No, this voice George is certain he heard with his own two ears. He glances around, not knowing what he's looking for in these crowds.

He thinks of dirty-blond hair and green eyes. Close-up images of hair and eyes posted to Twitter, and shared privately with George. Trying to remember every other hint Dream has given him over the years.

"Can you see me?" George asks, breathless. Scanning the large arrivals lounge. For what is now five in the morning, the airport is surprisingly busy. Though, George doesn't think Heathrow is ever truly quiet.

"Tell me what you're standing next to. You're clearly too short to see. Could you jump up and down or something? Wave your hands?"

"I'm going to punch you in the face." George's sigh is long-suffering.

Dream cackles so loud that George knows, for sure, he has heard it. "Not the face dude, anywhere but there."

His eyes land on the back of a head.

George pauses and lets the figure fill his focus. A man hunched in laughter, a phone pressed to his

ear. Turned away completely, head of hair and broad shoulders all that is in view.

Hair darker than George expected, darker than the sandy-blond drawn in fanart and posted online. More brown than anything else, probably from spending too much time indoors and not enough in the sun. George can picture that when the light hits it, it would seem almost golden. Wavy and a little long - someone who has gone too far between haircuts to keep it a consistent length.

"I think I see you." George breathes out slowly.

"You do?"

"Turn around."

The figure in front of him spins fast. Dream turns, eyes searching crowds until finally, inevitably, they land on George.

Dream's face breaks out into a grin and George is certain now.

Certainly blinded by that smile. Trying to make sense of who he sees, attach this face to every interaction, every conversation he's had with Dream over the years. This is the man who has been on the other side all along. The face of his best friend, owner of a cat named Patches, famed faceless YouTube star, an iconic laugh, a face that lights up when it spots George. Smile too big, teeth straight, a dimple high on his cheek, on just one side.

Closer than he's ever been before, approaching still.

George stands frozen to take it all in.

Nose a little crooked - like it's been broken before. A small half-moon scar on the bridge (it must have been a pretty bad accident then). Strange how George could have gone his entire life without the knowledge that it was there. Unaware to ask about it in the first place.

Barely-there freckles - Dream told him once he used to have more but after a year of sitting inside they've faded away, waiting for the sun to bring them out again. George feels desperate to see him in sunlight, without this awful airport lighting.

Dream's wearing his own merch, black hoodie with its familiar smile, high up his wrists like it's just not quite long enough for his overgrown limbs.

"If I get closer, you have to promise you're not going to punch me." George hears doubled speech, through the phone and out of Dream's mouth as the words hit his ears.

"I'm not going to punch you." George is taken aback, winded. Dream deserves a punch. George feels as though he's been hit in the gut, just looking at him.

His heart beats too fast with nervousness.

Despite feeling tired not so long ago, running on no energy and no sleep, George has never felt so awake.

These are the sum total of things that George already knew about Dream's appearance before meeting him: wavy-ish dirty-blond-ish hair. Green eyes. Freckles. Tall.

What he didn't expect is how inaccurate that all now seems with Dream in front of him for the first time.

Or perhaps, how incomparable those scarce descriptors are to the real thing.

George's brain plays catch up to try and figure it all out.

Dream's tall, 6'3 and looks every inch of it. Long legs in grey sweatpants, about a head taller than George is. It's not the mammoth distance people like to exaggerate as though George is some tiny bug and Dream is this hulking figure towering over him.

The difference is about what he expected.

They stand blinking at one another, phones still pressed to their ears.

And George knows Dream's eyes are green. It's an indisputable fact. It's just his luck he can't see green.

The thing is, he has no other frame of reference for what green looks like, apart from the confusing time he wore those colourblind glasses and the world appeared to him strange and wrong and confusing. So George sees what he sees - some darker shade of yellow. It's been this way his entire life and so even though he's aware he sees things different to reality, it doesn't seem such a bad thing.

Dream's eyes are green. George knows this with all his heart.

Colours don't seem to matter so much when you're looking into your best friend's eyes for the first time, seeing all that makes up his face. Colour isn't important at all.

And George is certain Dream has perfect eyes, no matter their colour.

"Hello." Dream's smile falls lopsided.

They're awkward all of a sudden, standing in front of one another. Like introducing yourself to someone for the first time, stumbling and unsure.

The hand Dream uses to hold his phone up falls to his side, George mirrors the movement.

"Hi." George can't remember half of what he wanted to say.

A punch or a hug. George doesn't remember why he was annoyed in the first place.

"Hey." Dream says again, whispery quiet. Searching George's face as though despite the fact he's seen it over the screen for years now, he's been just as blinded as George is.

They hug then. Before any more words can get out. George meeting Dream in the middle. Dream's arms tight around him, a hand that squeezes his shoulder in disbelief.

This is real! It reminds them both. *Here you are in front of me!*

They part before George can get used to the feeling of Dream's arms around him.

He doesn't know yet if he can quite believe this is happening. Or if this is simply a combination of too many energy drinks and a lack of sleep. As though at any moment he will awake at his desk, startled and entirely alone.

Dream takes a deep breath. "I can't believe I'm here."

"I- why are you here? Not that I don't want you here... it's just... y'know a bit of warning might

have been nice." George pins him a smile.

"Yeah... I uh." Dream looks away, bashful suddenly. Scratching a hand at the stubble on his chin before he meets George's eye again. "Well, actually it doesn't matter."

"It doesn't matter?" George makes a face.

"It does!" Dream backtracks. "It's not important though, right? I'm here now anyway."

He's not making much sense, but George lets him off the hook anyway. "Right."

Dream claps him on the shoulder abruptly, his entire demeanour shifting back to that confident smile. "It's so good to finally meet you, dude."

"You too," George tells him.

He's still off balance and blame it on his tiredness or the bizarre nature of Dream's visit, but he lets Dream's strangeness roll off his back.

Dream's here now, George is sure with enough time he can figure it out.

Chapter End Notes

and so they meet
...and so it begins!

here is the completed playlist for this fic! each chapter has a title song and sometimes an extra song too! [enjoy!](#)

and [here](#) is the link to this fic but on wattpad, if you would prefer to read it there!

you'll be on my mind

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Twenty minutes into meeting for the first time, not long past five am, Dream snaps a picture of George blinking tiredly in the seat opposite as the train rolls back to London.

The Underground has made time seem little more than a vague concept. Lighting artificial and just a smidge too bright, the screech of the train pulling along the tracks too loud in their ears.

Despite his tiredness, George isn't sure he could sleep if he tried.

It makes this unreality of being with Dream all the more bizarre.

The carriage is empty apart from the two of them and the harsh overhead light does nothing for the mousing pressure at George's temple.

They sit opposite one another, an odd choice this far apart. But George sat first and Dream had decided not to sit in the seat beside him but opposed. A mirror image of the other. The distance makes the urge George has to reach out and squeeze Dream in his hands unfathomable. To check he's made of substance, skin and clothes, the atoms of the universe that make us all real. Stardust.

What he wants to know for certain is that this is not some mirage concocted by his own sleep-drunk mind.

There's so much to say, to ask. Namely to shake Dream by the shoulders and make him answer the burning question, *what the fuck are you doing here?*

He doesn't have the energy to do more than stare in wonder.

Minutes after Dream not-so-subtly takes the picture, George discovers it has been posted on one of Dream's Twitter accounts. Of George, half-slumped in his seat, sunk into his hoodie with his eyes dozing shut, in the reflection of the window behind him, Dream an unrecognisable shadow with phone in hand, features undefined, an outline of messy hair.

It takes not two whole minutes after posting for Sapnap's reply to appear in George's mentions. An all-caps '*WHAT THE FUCK????*' That has Dream cackling (definitely replying something snarky) and George baring an uncontrolled grin.

So Sapnap had no clue about this either, George surmises.

Predictably, their followers are going off the rails about this meeting in the replies. When George refreshes his feed, his timeline looks like something not even aliens could comprehend.

Dream reads out some of the funnier ones to George, mirth alive in his eyes. Already there's a debate over if this is real or some trick akin to *The Vlog*. George will have to shoot Wilbur a text, see if he fancies an outing to Pizza Hut with the two of them any time soon.

When he glances across the carriage it's clear Dream is enjoying the chaos he has purposefully created, eyes shining in delight as he scrolls.

This can't be the reason for this trip, surely? To surprise their fans as much as George has been. But Dream hasn't mentioned anything of face revealing or filming their meeting. Entirely content, apart from this photo, to keep their meeting to themselves.

It's strange, to see someone's reactions after only hearing the audible ones for so long. As though something has finally clicked into place, something George was unaware he was missing.

He finds himself agreeing with Sapnap, *what the fuck* indeed.

Dream grins at another tweet, a scoff falling from his lips, unaware of George's brain whirring like a broken machine.

They arrive at George's Underground stop. Identical to most others around London. A little bit dingy, the off-white tiled walls lined with rows of advertising posters.

An overflowing bin, next to it a neat row of bottles as though someone has taken the time to line them up like that. It may be some new type of street art George is too uncultured to be aware of. A comment on the state of the world, global warming or society. Or probably just a bored Londoner lining up their rubbish as they wait for a train.

Dream looks all around as though the tiled, curved walls of the Underground platform are something intriguing. He ticks with energy at George's side, a stupid grin stuck to his face like glue, waiting for George so he can follow.

George is distracted by the intensity of it.

If this is what Dream's smiles are always like George doesn't know how he's going to be able to handle them.

You really wouldn't think he had travelled ten hours to be here. At this point, George can't quite remember what sleeping feels like.

Leading a way, they head to the escalator to rise to ground level.

"Is Sapnap actually mad then?" George asks. Assuming Dream has talked to their other best friend.

Dream shrugs. "Mad that he didn't get invited, yeah." He reads a poster as they glide past it, advertising some new book or play or movie that's Coming Soon!

George watches Dream. "You really didn't tell anyone about this, did you?"

"I saw my mom. Dropped Patches off. Texted my sister that I'd be away for a while." Dream answers, apprehensive like he's aware of how insane he sounds.

George stares. "What would you have done if I was actually asleep when you texted me? Wandered about London like a lost puppy?"

"I hedged my bets."

They reach the peak of the escalator, Dream's little suitcase clanking as he lifts it and sets it back on solid ground.

Dream responds to George's dumbfounded expression with a snort. "C'mon, your sleep schedule is as fucked as mine. I knew you'd be awake."

"You were lucky."

George knows if he's going to survive this imbecile, he's going to have to be amused instead of annoyed by the shit he does without thinking. It all worked out in the end, he supposes.

He would still be awake tonight even if Dream hadn't dragged him across London to pick him up. Probably still on a call with Sapnap and Dream, Karl and Quackity. Any number of their other friends.

Above ground, on the quiet street outside the station, Dream comes to a standstill, taking a deep breath of the crisp morning air. Looking around like he can't get his fill.

It's only the street outside the station. There's graffiti on the brick of the outside wall that has been there for as long as George has lived in the area. Colourful and wearing away.

Across the road is the off-license, only useful for buying milk or a bottle of coke when you're on your way out and need a quick drink. As they continue their walk to George's flat, they pass rows of terraced townhouses that cost in a month's rent what George makes from YouTube AdSense in a year.

Down the way, there's a Wetherspoons where he goes sometimes with friends, old Uni mates.

All in all, it's quite the boring old London. Nothing much to see.

The sky is a dusky shade of black and blue. The moon hangs low in the smog as the ascent to daylight begins.

George's eye twitches tiredly, next to him Dream bounces as they walk. Like he's had too much caffeine, though George knows he swore the stuff of ages ago.

A jogger huffs past in the opposite direction, cool morning air visible with every outwards breath.

Dream keeps glancing over, mouth opening and then not saying anything at all. George doesn't know what to make of it.

He supposes Dream is waiting for George to tell him what they're doing next. Point out the things they pass as though Big Ben is waiting around the corner. George has nothing to offer, unable to provide cohesive thought.

Dream's suitcase bounces on an uneven paving stone, rattling as it hits a crack in the cobble. It shakes George's daze away, they share a matching glance.

"Is it broke?"

Dream pulls harshly at the thing, the right wheel doesn't seem to want to turn anymore, scraping along the ground.

"Looks like it."

"I'm not carrying it," George tells him.

"Did I ask you to?"

"No. Just saying, I'm not."

"I've got this, it's not that heavy anyway." Dream hefts the thing by the short side strap into his hand.

As they walk, it offsets his gait and George finds Dream falling into his path. Walking crookedly. Shoulder's brushing, knocking into each other.

"Sooo." Dream drags his words out. "What are we doing tomorrow? Or today I guess?" His tone is enthusiastic, his gaze searching.

"Sleeping." George raises an eyebrow. He genuinely can't imagine wanting anything other than crawling into bed.

Dream looks to George as though he's the insane one. "What? That's boring. If I'm going to be in London I don't wanna waste time sleeping!"

"Some of us require sleep to exist, Dream." George deadpans. They cut across the road, heading to George's flat. The city sights will most certainly have to wait another day until George has had his head on a pillow for a good few hours.

"How long are you even planning on staying?" George asks quickly.

It probably sounded rude. But George thinks it was awfully rude of Dream to drop into the country unannounced, so he can deal until George has decided to forgive him.

Dream shrugs.

"You don't know?" He offers a judgemental eyebrow raise.

"I may not have booked a return flight yet." Correction: in this instance, '*may not*' is obsolete as Dream knows for certain he *has not* booked a return flight yet. "I was going to see how long you'd keep me round before you got sick of me."

"How soon can you book a flight back?"

"Wow. That's not nice George. I'm wounded!" Dream laughs.

Feeling nice for once, George adds: "You can stay as long as you want."

"Thanks."

"I'm sure we'll get sick of each other before too long anyway."

Dream gives him a long look. "As if I'd get sick of you." His voice comes out softer than the playful rebuttal George was expecting.

George ducks his head, unsure of what to say. Letting Dream see his eyes roll instead. "Whatever." He mutters, dumbstruck.

They reach the entrance to the block of flats George lives in, George using his key to open the front door and holding it wide for Dream and his suitcase. Stepping into the main hallway and then walking up the creaky old stairs. It's an old building, Victorian probably, repurposed by some estate agency years ago and changed from one big house into multiple little flats on each floor. George gets the high ceilings of an old house, though not a lot of the space or grandeur. Most of the original features were torn out and replaced over the years - with the clinical blandness of most London flats like it.

They reach the first floor where George's flat resides.

Upon reaching the door, he pauses outside, forgetting a very important detail up until this moment.

"I don't have anywhere for you to sleep."

Dream's dark brows furrow. Looking to the door, then George again. "Don't you have a spare room or something?"

George laughs in sharp amusement. "I don't know how much you think rent costs in London, but this is classed as a 'big' flat and it has, like, three rooms total."

"Oh."

Unlocking the door, George figures he may as well show Dream what he means. They step inside together, George gesturing around. His flat is pretty nice for living alone in central London but it's probably nothing compared to Dream's house in Florida. Which he is starting to suspect is a secret McMansion from what Dream has said and the rare photos he has seen.

"You have a sofa?"

It's surely a rhetorical question, considering it's right in front of them. Sitting only a metre or two from the door.

"No I sit on the floor, clearly," George replies, poker-faced.

"I just mean that..." Dream huffs, a usual bemused response to George's snark. His eyes even roll, George can only wonder how often that has accompanied the huff of air too. "I can just sleep there then." He finishes.

"I'm not sure the floor's very comfortable to sleep on." George continues, same toneless way as before. Blatantly misconstruing Dream's meaning.

George's mouth curls up at the corners.

"Oh shut up, idiot! It's fine, I'll sleep on the sofa. I've slept worse places." Dream shoves him at the shoulder. George sways with it.

"Do I want to know?" George asks, brushing off the strange phantom pressure Dream's touch leaves behind.

"Probably not."

"Only if you're sure?" George's sentence is interrupted by a yawn "—I can book you a hotel? It might not be very comfortable." He looks at the sofa, beckoning Dream further into the flat as he closes the door behind them.

"Dude, I came here to see you, so I'm staying with you. Unless you want me sleeping in the same bed as you I don't mind the sofa."

Then quickly, Dream adds: Unless you don't even want me staying here. I'll get a hotel if you want some space." he rubs at his neck. "I get that I've dumped myself on you so suddenly. I didn't really think about it, so I wouldn't be offended or anything."

"Dream," George says, which means: *shut up idiot, you're rambling.*

"I mean, I don't mind if we share?" George shrugs, more a question than confirmation. They're both tired, the bedroom is only a few steps away and George plans on collapsing in it as soon as possible. They can sort out official sleeping arrangements tomorrow if it comes to that.

The idea of Dream in his bed doesn't bother him as much as he thought it would. As much as anyone else being there sounds. Maybe that's just the nature of Dream being who he is to George.

"Well, alright then. We're sharing I guess." Dream agrees, wide-eyed.

George shrugs again.

Dream's suitcase is set aside, allowing himself to look around George's flat for the first time. George knows it's messy, it almost always is, if he'd had more time to prepare he might have tidied up some. But probably not.

Dream eyes the clutter on George's shelves. Picking up a Millennium Falcon replica and turning with a raised brow.

"Shut up."

"I didn't say anything." Dream snorts, appearing interested in everything he comes across, despite his teasing. His fingers tap against a little Golden Snitch figure and he offers George a fond smile.

Looking away, George pulls at his sleeves, shuffling his feet.

He yawns, stretching through it and brushing his raised hand through his hair. Dream has turned to him, something in his eyes and the curve of his mouth that looks like a question.

"Y'okay?" George mutters.

"I uh—" Dream flinches and makes some sort of aborted gesture that gets him nowhere. He looks like he's going to say something, but after a moment he shakes his head. Decision made.

"Yeah." Dream clears his throat. "Just had a long day."

George nods in sympathy.

It's almost six in the morning and they stand in George's living room inspecting decor when they could be sleeping.

Making an executive decision, George heads to the bedroom.

"You coming to bed?" He yawns again, rubbing his face with his hand as he waits for Dream to follow.

Dream takes a second longer, blinking with another unfamiliar expression on his face, in the same spot by George's shelves.

George realises, with ravenous curiosity, that all of Dream's expressions are unfamiliar to him. He wants to witness them all, every emotion he can think of and the way it may sit on Dream's face.

"I could use some sleep, yeah." Dream follows.

In his room, George's PC whirrs softly, though the monitors are off. It would be the sensible thing to do to shut it down properly, close the programs he has left running, but the white noise of it has never bothered George. And right now, he really, really can't be arsed to deal with it. Instead, he kicks off his shoes and collapses onto the right side of his double bed.

"You're still wearing jeans." He hears Dream inform him. Muffled, because George's head is already buried in his pillow. "And your jacket."

"Don't care. Sleep." He replies. His head has grown fuzzy, disconnected from the world around him.

He hears Dream shuffling around, and then the bed shifts as he climbs into the other side. A solid weight that makes the bed dip and though they aren't touching, Dream provides a solid line of heat that makes it oh so easy to fall under, into sleep.

By the time a quiet, *"Goodnight, George"* is whispered close to him, George is already fast asleep.

Chapter End Notes

chapter song — you'll be on my mind by jakob ogawa

so many things left unsaid.

english morning

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Waking up is a confusing affair, in that there is something off-kilter about the way George is laying and he's pretty sure his cat snuck onto the bed sometime in the night because he's oddly warm on one side.

Though, George doesn't think it's possibly his cat that is snoring this loud.

Awareness comes back with the long stretch of his sleep-stiff limbs.

Last night. The texts. The airport. Dream.

Awareness also comes with the discomfort of waking still wearing yesterday's jeans and the jacket he'd shoved on to go get Dream.

George blinks groggily, pawing around with a numb hand until he finds his phone, still in jacket pocket.

It's a struggle to sit himself up when all he wants is to submit to the warm comfort of sleep, but he prevails. Eyes half shut as he removes his uncomfortable clothing.

First, his jacket which he shucks off and drops onto the floor by the bed. Then, standing on clumsy legs, he rids himself of his jeans. Careful and as quiet as possible, he doesn't want to wake Dream.

Sitting back on the bed in just his boxers and hoodie, dazed and confused, he summons the energy to glance at his phone. Opening it to numerous messages, a couple from Karl, a spam of texts from Quackity. He ignores them all. Instead, making the mistake of opening Twitter. George discovers that Sapnap has gone dark, the phrase *DREAM'S IN LONDON* trended worldwide at some point and his timeline is full of people analysing the photo Dream took of George on the train.

Business as usual it seems.

Exiting Twitter, George shoots Sapnap a text. He'll try comprehend everyone else's messages later. Sapnap's the one who deserves an update on what is happening, considering Dream didn't even bother telling him that he was flying to England.

And also, George can't help but tease.

GEORGE

Dream snores so loud

He's not sure what time it is in Texas but Sapnap's reply is almost instant.

SAPNAP

YO SLEPT WITH DREAM??

SAPNAP

GOOD FOR U DUDE!!!

SAPNAP

BE WHO U ARE <3333

George snorts. He'd poke Dream and show him the reaction if he didn't want to wake his friend.

GEORGE

We're sharing a bed bc he's an idiot and didn't book a hotel

GEORGE

So he didn't tell you he was coming either?

SAPNAP

no :/ kinda annoyed tbh, wanted us to meet all together

GEORGE

Me too. I thought that was the plan. Confused about why he's here now

SAPNAP

he wants you all to himself :(

GEORGE

Jealous

SAPNAP

yeh, i want some gogy too <'3

GEORGE

Ew

SAPNAP

shut up georgie-poo, u love it

GEORGE

You disgust me

SAPNAP

is georgie-poo what dream calls u now you've slept together :]

GEORGE

Jealousy is a disease

SAPNAP

and i'm incurable baby

GEORGE

Go away

SAPNAP

text me later and tell dreamie-poo i want to talk to him

GEORGE

K

With that, George drops his phone onto the pillow next to him, leaning back against the headboard. It's eleven am, that's not even a full five hours since they fell asleep in the first place. Though if

they don't want to fuck up their sleep schedule too much they should probably wake up and try to retain some form of normalcy.

He lets his eyes rest on the man beside him.

Dream sleeps like any other twenty-something-year-old lacking spatial awareness, limbs sprawled carelessly, face smushed into the pillow. His hair a mess and his mouth hanging open.

George can't fight the smile off. He supposes it won't hurt if he lets Dream sleep longer. It'll give George the chance to catch his brain up with reality anyway. He pokes Dream in the side, just once, because he can do that now. So he can feel the solid press of his finger against Dream's ribs. Dream sleeps on, undisturbed.

Standing, George stretches his arms and cranes his neck until he hears the satisfying click of his back. He crosses his bedroom to his PC, turns it on and slides into his desk chair.

Abandoned, the video from last night appears when his monitors kick in and though George needs to get it finished, he's not in the mood to sit in front of his computer this early, when Dream is there in his bed.

Last night, *Before Dream*, seems a million years ago. He can barely recall what he talked about with Quackity, what the video he was editing is even about.

Across the room, he hears a groan. Spinning in his chair George is met with the sight of Dream stirring. A mess of dark-blond hair and a stray leg poking out from under the duvet cover. It appears he was smart enough to take his sweatpants off before getting into bed, unlike George. Where the cover has been moved away, his long legs are bare.

After all the shuffling is done, Dream's head rises from the covers that consume him. He looks around the room, blinking with heavy-lidded eyes.

"Time is it?" He grumbles, voice low and rough from waking. Squinting at George, eyes not really open, probably not seeing much of anything. As though the effort is simply too much. Jet lag has definitely caught up with him

"Six minutes past eleven." George grins, with a glance at the corner of his monitor to double-check.

Dream sighs, his head falling back onto the pillows.

He doesn't say anything else - sleepiness clearly winning against the fight to stay awake. Though it's not much of a fight when he has surrendered to it so willingly. George finds himself amused, Dream was the one who wanted to stay up and explore London at six am and now he's the one who won't wake up for it.

Not having the heart to keep the Floridian from his much-needed rest, George stands from his computer chair. If he's going to do anything today he needs some caffeine in his system, immediately.

Heading to the kitchen, George fills the kettle with water from his tap, flicking it on once it's full and settled back on the stand.

He uses the time waiting for it to boil to be very productive. By staring into space, head empty.

Then finds himself staring specifically at Dream's suitcase where it has been left in the middle of

the living room space. It's fairly small, George frowns, even though Dream didn't seem to have any formal plans to return soon.

All the questions from last night come flooding back to him. What is Dream doing? He wonders. What made him decide to come to London so suddenly, without warning?

Dream can be hot-headed but he usually thinks things through. Especially big things like expensive plane tickets across the Atlantic.

With a small case like that, Dream can't have brought much, can't have thought very far ahead. And George knows how busy Dream can be, busy in meetings with his merch company, with potential channel sponsors. It's not like he can stay here in London indefinitely, eventually, real life will have to carry on again. And yet Dream has disregarded it all, on a whim.

To come see George.

The cat at his feet distracts George from his thoughts, she rubs her face against his shins, purring. He strokes her soft fur as she watches him with her big, dark eyes.

"What are we going to do with him?" George asks her.

His cat doesn't answer. Clearly, she's as dumbfounded as he is.

When she's done receiving her fill of attention for the moment, she wanders off in the direction of the bedroom.

The kettle has finished boiling, George puts a teabag in a mug that says *'Happy Birthday Grandma!'* across it in hot pink lettering. A relic from the time he lived in his old university flat. Where he was the dedicated house grandma for never wanting to go out drinking and instead preferring to stay hidden away in his room, talking to Dream and his other friends and coding until the early hours of morning. Some things never change.

Once his tea is made, he sips at it slowly, wandering his flat. Poking at things he doesn't usually spare a glance at. Putting food in his cat's bowl. Staring forlornly at the crispy-looking plant on his windowsill. He's not sure he's ever watered it.

Taking a clean glass that's sat in the drying rack, he fills it partially, mercifully watering the poor parched thing. Though it may be beyond saving.

A dead leaf flutters down onto the windowsill. George sighs.

He's not sure how he's going to entertain Dream while he's here, or what exactly Dream is expecting of him. He wants to show Dream around London, this he knows. But the rest of it is all up in the air. First on the agenda is definitely going to be to go and get something to eat. Because George can't cook for shit and he'd really rather not embarrass himself in front of company. They can decide what to do with the rest of the day while eating.

At a quarter to twelve, George gets sick of doing nothing while Dream lies in bed. He decides it's about time he woke his friend up.

The sun is high in the sky at this point, which means despite the blinds being shut in his bedroom, daylight pours in through any crevice it can infiltrate. It crawls across the room in honey-golden lines, creating stripes of light and shade.

Dream's head is hidden under the covers - trying to escape the break of day. He has managed to

almost completely conceal himself away, apart from a stray foot and a hint of elbow.

"Dream?" George calls uncertainly, stepping into his room.

He calls his friend's name again, louder, unsure of how he wants to go about this.

The cat is curled at the foot of the bed, taking up her usual sleeping spot. Her little head perks up at George, tail flicking curiously. Great, he's woken the laziest cat in England and Dream is still snoring in bed.

"Dream," George repeats. The bed cover shifts and Dream disappears under the covers altogether.

"Dream." George sings when it grows clear Dream is purposefully ignoring him in further of getting a few more morsels of sleep.

Deciding action is the best method, George grabs onto an edge of the quilt with his hands and yanks as hard as he can. Dream's eyes flash open, limbs scrambling as he yelps in surprise. Somehow, he manages to catch part of the cover with a hand and pull it back towards himself.

George laughs, surprised.

"No!" Dream whines childishly.

They wind up in a game of tug of war with the cover, Dream getting both hands on one side, George the other.

"This is for your own good! You need to wake up!"

"Let me sleep!"

"No! You can sleep when you're dead."

"You're going to have to kill me then because I'm not moving!"

Then Dream yanks the covers with all his weight and George, unprepared for the ferocity of it, goes flying forward. He braces for impact, smacking straight into Dream.

The bed bounces from the force and George's cat bolts. Off the bed and out the room - her sharp nails skittering across the floorboards.

George ends up tangled between quilt, bed and Dream. A perfectly-timed elbow has slammed into Dream's stomach. It was well-deserved. Even as he wheezes in pain. George still pressed to him. Pinning him down.

"What the fuck George!" He manages through muffled gasps of pain and laughter.

George sits up, grinning. Taking his weight away so his friend can breathe. "That was your fault, idiot! If you hadn't pulled on the quilt and got up instead of acting like a baby, this wouldn't have happened!"

"You're dead, you're so dead." Dream wheezes but makes no move apart from clutching at his stomach.

"Yeah, you look like you could deal massive damage to me right now." George gives him a critical once over, taking in Dream's flushed face and rumpled clothes, t-shirt pulling up at his midriff, exposing pale skin to the air.

Dream manages an angled kick at George's thigh, it does nothing more than jostle him, the other man not actually attempting to hurt.

"Ooh, ouchie. *That one stings!*" George mocks.

"Jerk." Dream pouts. He lets his head fall back onto the pillow yet again. Sighing deeply.

"I'll elbow you again if you go back to sleep." George shuffles closer, poking Dream at where the bare skin of his side is exposed. Dream swats around with his eyes closed, missing completely.

"Not sleeping. Just thinking about how you're going to make this up to me."

"Me? This is all you!" George's eyes roll.

Dream looks at him, pouting, then begins a dramatic routine of fake sniffing and crying that has George rolling his eyes.

"Fine. If you stop acting like a big baby, I'll buy you lunch."

"Deal." Dream drops his act immediately, a shit-eating grin on his stupid face.

So fucking annoying. George huffs, his own face warm.

This has been a strange introduction to what being around Dream is like. George finds himself uncomfortable for reasons he can't name. Finding Dream endearing and frustrating in equal measure. Not fully settled into how he can interact with him, though Dream seems to have settled into it with as much ease as he has settled into George's bed.

They get around to getting ready. Taking turns to use the shower and to get dressed. Dream takes ages to finish changing and George sits trying to comfort his growling, empty stomach.

Sapnap, still in dark mode on Twitter, has vague-tweeted (the aim is clear) *'these hoes ain't loyal'*, the replies to which are along the same vein of *'keep your head up king'* or people treating the situation way too seriously. As though Dream and George's meeting is a betrayal of the highest order and Sapnap should strike them from his life immediately.

He wonders if Sapnap has slept since they last texted. George shoots him a quick *GO TO SLEEP* as Dream, dressed for the day, finally emerges into the living room.

He's not what George expected, in dark-wash straight-leg jeans, a white t-shirt under a soft-looking beige checked jacket. George was under the impression Dream lived entirely in sweatpants and basketball shorts. He considers saying something, but decides against it, he likes this look on Dream.

George by comparison feels underdressed in his jumper and joggers by comparison. He finds his (Wilbur's) denim jacket (still in a heap next to his bed) and shoves it on over the top, in the hopes it makes him look like he put in a little more effort than he has.

Dream's hand reaches out and pulls at his jacket collar. George brushes his hand away.

"Dude! I'm trying to fix your collar for you, it's all twisted." Dream laughs.

"I thought you were going to... I don't know. I thought you were going to do something weird." George says, feeling awkward and overwhelmed. He fixes his collar himself. "But thanks I guess."

"You're so welcome." Dream fixes him a funny look, amusement and something else altogether.

"Let's go. I'm starving!" George moves past Dream to the door. Continuing to ignore the look as he pulls it open swiftly.

"Ladies first," He smirks at Dream.

Rolling his eyes, Dream moves through the door and out into the hall, George following. Once the door is locked they head down the stairwell. He's only on the first floor so it takes less than a minute to reach the street. It's busy at midday, cars and taxis flying past in either direction. They step onto the pathway, George turning right, away from the direction they came in last night.

Walking shoulder to shoulder, they're only separated when they have to go single file to let people pass by. A gaggle of older women in sari's chatting, a trio of teenagers huddled around a phone, a man walking at least seven dogs on leashes attached to belts at his waist. Dream stops to pet one of them, a fluffy little thing that must still be a puppy.

George waits ahead for Dream to catch up.

"Where are we going?" Dream asks as he approaches.

"Spoons," George says back over his shoulder. "Wetherspoons."

"What's that? The Spoons? Does it have food?"

"Yeah, The Spoons has food." George snorts at the phrasing. Dream looks at him, confused.

"What?" He chuckles despite not knowing what's set George off.

"The Spoons." George laughs again.

"That's what you said, isn't it? The Spoons?"

"It's just Spoons or Wetherspoons."

"Oh c'mon. How is that funny? I misheard you." Dream scoffs. "*Spoons, The Spoons*. You're so..." Dream mutters to himself, head shaking as he hides a smile.

"Americans." George laughs like that answers everything. Dream sighs, resigned to letting him get on with it.

They get to Spoons or The Spoons or Wetherspoons, depending on your disposition. It's a regal-looking exterior of one of London's endless listed buildings concealing what is actually a very substandard British establishment.

It's a Spoons, like a Pret or a Greggs, they've infected every corner of the city.

The interior is unremarkable from every other Spoons in the country - stuck between wanting to look modern and old-fashioned. As though *'old lady's living room chic'* was the phrase the interior designer was pitched when planning it. Inside is quiet, save a few young people, probably students, sat around eating and two old blokes by the bar, getting the rounds in nice and early. The bar staff stand cleaning glasses and chatting.

The booth they slide in hides them away from most of the sights and sounds. The table they sit at has the familiar residual stickiness that remains no matter how hard you scrub at it.

George pulls out his phone so they can look at the menu on his app, shoving it into Dream's hands to put in his order.

George's so hungry he could eat a banquet hall of food. He says as much to Dream, who laughs, agreeing with him.

After food and drinks are ordered and in front of them, they decide how they're going to spend the rest of the day. Getting distracted while stealing each other's chips and spilling ketchup all over the table - a mishap with a sauce packet exploding.

Though you can't exactly call it a mishap when George purposefully slammed his hand down on the packet to create chaos.

Dream had wheezed out a "*George!*" as they hastily mopped up the mess splattered across the table with napkins, carefully avoiding the attention of passing bar staff.

George doesn't contribute much to the clean-up - too distracted by Dream's reaction. His face alight with the size of his grin, barely able to contain his hiccuping laughs long enough to clean. An eye-narrowing, teeth-bared sort of smile had taken over his features. The chaos was well worth it for that.

"Can we go to the beach?" Dream had asked, after sobering up enough.

"Don't you live in Florida? You guys are like all beach there." George says between a sip of his coke.

"I mean, I guess. But so what anyway? Beaches are fun! I want to go to one here!"

"I hate sand," George tells him.

"I like sand."

"It gets, everywhere Dream. Everywhere."

Dream remains unbothered by this declaration.

"Anyway, there aren't any beaches in London. Unless you want to sit along the Thames." George's nose wrinkles. "We could go to Brighton. They have a pier. We could meet Wilbur."

Dream guffaws. "Brighton's not a proper beach. It's all rock, even I know that!"

"You're the one who wants a beach so badly."

"We'll think of something else today then."

"Okay, like what?"

"I don't know." George shrugs and sips his coke. Eyeing Dream's own drink discreetly. He'd put salt in it while Dream was in the bathroom and he's waiting for the inevitable reaction.

"You live here, how can you not know what to do?"

"Don't know if you've noticed, but I don't exactly go out much." George grimaces.

"Fair." Dream swirls his straw around in his coke, not taking a drink yet. George watches, waiting.

"We should do something really tourist-y. One of those open-top bus tours. I've seen those before, in movies and shit." Dream exclaims. An excited look on his face, akin to that of an energetic puppy. George is only human, he can't say no to it.

"Sure." George shrugs. "I'll see which one's the best for tourist stuff." He pulls up Google on his phone, searching for where they need to go.

George almost misses as Dream takes a drink of his salt-coke cocktail.

The reaction is as dramatic as he anticipated.

Chapter End Notes

chapter song — english morning by kowloon

sometimes actions speak louder than words.

sometimes people put salt in your coke and wait for you to drink it.

london boy

Chapter Notes

pov switch ahead! thought i'd give a heads up incase it's confusing!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

A TOURISTS GUIDE TO LONDON!

By Dream (and George)

The guide below will ensure a great day trip out in London! Rest assured if you want a day full of yearning, almost confessions and all the sights London has to offer, Dream (and George) know exactly what is required!

STEP ONE: Eat food before your trip begins! It is well known that you will have more energy for the day ahead if you eat something beforehand.

RISK WARNING: Be careful to avoid incidents with sauce packets and salt in soda which could disrupt the progress of this first step. This can be avoided of course, if your best friend isn't George. If your best friend isn't George, you may skip **STEP TWO**.

STEP TWO: Wash the taste of salt-flavoured coke out of your mouth. Steal George's drink as payback. Ignore his pout, giving in is a sign of weakness.

STEP THREE: And you're off! Well, almost. Follow the directions provided by Google Maps to where the nearest bus stop is! Spend most of the walk trying to trip George over whilst he's distracted by his phone. This is made easier by having longer legs than him as you can get ahead of him quicker.

Long legs are highly recommended for this step to work!

"Dream!" George will shout at you in that tone. You know the one. You've heard it plenty of times over the years. It's George's 'I'm British and You're Annoying' voice. At least, that's what you call it in your head.

You can't hide your grin behind the anonymity of a voice call anymore.

It's a little intimidating being here, with him. It might feel like you're free-falling or tightrope-walking or some other activity, as equally terrifying.

"Are we there yet?" This is something you may want to ask to further provoke your own George, in a tone of voice that can be categorised as 'American Kid on a Roadtrip.'

George will huff and glance back at his phone. He probably won't reply, still annoyed at you for

trying to trip him over multiple times. This may make you want to provoke him more.

RISK WARNING: Provoking George will most likely result in dangerous consequences, such as: ignoring you, playing you at your own game and/or vicious attack (this last one is very rare, reserved for trying to murder you in Minecraft).

“I think it’s around the corner.” He’ll say eventually. He may sound annoyed but you know George well enough to know it’s all an act.

You grin at him on a busy London street. He rolls his eyes and then smiles right back at you.

STEP THREE-POINT-FIVE: Have a moment of introspection as you complete the last stretch of your journey to the bus stop.

London is big. (Obviously).

You’ll want to look at everything, stop at every sight there is to see. There aren’t a lot of buildings like these back in Florida. Old cut stone that’s hundreds of years old (some of it even older than your country), hard limestone carved into delicate ornate shapes.

There is history all around you. Take it all in. Some of it spanning as far back as the Romans and even further back in time than that. Centuries old buildings still standing grandly, sat beside skyscrapers made entirely of glass, so tall that in the London fog you can barely see the top.

The trouble is there’s so much you want to do. But here you are, looking at it all, overwhelmed by the sight of it.

There isn’t enough time in the world or enough words in your head that could express everything you want to say.

The truth is, despite the point of this guide, you’re not actually in London to sightsee.

You allow yourself to glance at George now. Unphased by London’s sights. He grew up here, you suppose he’s used to it.

He’ll never know (he can never know) how much you’re freaking out inside. How you spend over nine hours on a flight from Orlando International Airport to London Heathrow with your stomach in knots (and it wasn’t because of the turbulence).

Until yesterday George hadn’t even seen your face. You feel as though this should be a bigger deal than it is. Though you don’t know what that means, what it is you expected.

The problem is, you’re here on impulse. The same old shit that always gets you in trouble, that makes you speak before thinking, react rashly and defensively when you feel as though you’re backed into a corner.

Your trip to London was decided three days ago. In a Discord call. As George messed around coding a plugin he’d been working on and you tested it for him on a server to help find bugs. Sapnap long ago clocked out to go to bed.

It happened then, this decision. In an unassuming Discord call, similar to countless others you’ve had over the years.

You'll probably remember that night well, because your room was a few degrees too warm, the air around you making your t-shirt stick to your skin. Even the automatic cycle of your air conditioning unit tried to tell you that you should have been asleep by now.

His camera was on, webcam fuzz of a dark room because he wanted to show you his cat curled up in his lap. He hadn't turned it off yet, maybe he'd forgotten about it, maybe he was comfortable enough that he didn't feel the need to (you weren't complaining).

Both of you were tired, talking nonsense at this point. Someone should have made the decision, took the initiative to end the call first. The longer it continued the more it turned into a game of chicken.

You were tracking a beam of light from George's side of the world, as it travelled across his floor. (The sun had left you a couple of hours ago and had found its way there, to London) It had been just about to make its way along the unmade sheets of his bed.

"*Dreaaaam.*" He had sighed-slash-groaned in tiredness. Head tipped back, exposing the long line of his throat. The collar of his jumper pulled up at the back as he sank further down his chair. His eyes betrayed his tiredness, half-shut, blinking repeatedly as though he had to remind himself to keep them open.

"*Geooorge.*" You'd mimicked his tone in return. Something rising in your chest, turning in your stomach, a heat so consuming that your face burned with it. The air conditioning definitely needed turning down a few degrees.

"I'm tired."

"Go to sleep then." You'd snorted, closing out of Minecraft and turned your full attention to him, full-screen view on one of your monitors.

"Need to finish."

"Finish later. The code's not gonna run away while you're sleeping."

"Might. Might get so sick of me being bad that it leaves me. Finds someone else." George had pouted, ever the whiny child when tired.

"The code could never leave you, George. It loves you too much." You had cooed. You were supposed to sound mocking, but somehow it hadn't come out like that. It must have been the tiredness making you overly sincere.

"Oh yeah?" His head had rolled to the side, towards his computer. You'd thought he must have been looking at your Discord icon, the little sleeping figure.

Maybe this is the downfall of you, Dream, your own overthinking. George staring at your icon and you wondering how he pictured you in his head.

Anything close to the truth? Did he try to imagine you at all?

"Yeah." You had whispered back eventually. Thread of conversation forgotten.

George. The slump of his tired frame, the shadows cutting across his face. You remember now, how your fingers had curled with the desire to reach through your screen somehow and touch the curve of his jaw, tilt his head up with your fingertips so he was looking right at you.

How instead you had pressed the pads of your fingers to your own jaw, holding them there.

You remember how silent the call was between this moment and the next. No keyboard taps or mouse clicks. How you thought he'd fallen asleep right at his desk, in the middle of nonsensical conversation. As you tried to get a grip on your own irrational desires. His eyes had been closed. In the dim-lit quality of the webcam, his eyelashes had been dark lines against his cheeks.

"Wish you were here right now." He'd murmured. Quiet, content.

His mic had been a little far away, slumped too far back in his chair to be entirely audible. If you hadn't been listening so closely, you might have missed this next part.

"Wish... wish I could see you."

What was there to say, to that? What the hell were you supposed to do but not want that? Not make that true.

How strange it had seemed, to have been best friends with George for that many years and he still had never even looked at you. You'd never seen him without a screen and an entire ocean separating you.

"George?" You'd said softly, words catching in your throat.

"Mhm?" He hummed. Tiredness had overtaken him now, so much so that he was barely comprehending your words, barely thinking about his own. Still, at the sound of you calling him, his eyes managed to open.

You had wanted to ask if he meant it. If that was true.

"Go to sleep." You whispered. Tender. Close enough to your mic that you could feel the foam cover against your lips. Close to his ear as you could get.

"Sleep." He repeated.

"Go to sleep, George." You reminded him, with distinct finality.

He began to move in front of you, you heard the squeak of his chair as he shuffled close. Watched him move: a pale bare leg came into view. Bony knee curled up in front of him, somehow keeping balance. You had wished, wanted, wondered if you could fit the entire span of your hand perfectly over that knee.

His head had been tilted back, supported by one of his shoulders.

"Gonna read me a bedtime story?" His words had slurred together. "Tuck me in and kiss me goodnight?" Maybe, this was sleep-drunk George's attempt at teasing. Maybe, you wished, wanted, wondered, this was the sort of thing George could only say when he wasn't overthinking.

Maybe he wished, wanted, wondered the same about you.

"If you want me to." You found yourself saying. Something warm and whole turned over in your stomach.

He'd said something, or maybe mouthed it. Because whatever his reply was it was impossible to decipher, even as you watched his mouth move around the words.

There was a plan. There was supposed to be a plan. To wait for George's VISA. First Sapnap

would move in and then eventually, hopefully, George would follow. The three of you in Orlando together.

But then George had whispered about wishes and you had been too overwhelmed that you'd done something stupid.

Thinking about seeing him. In the flesh.

Thinking *fuck it*. Fuck the fact that you're supposed to stay between these four walls. You're sick of the sight of them. Fuck the fact that you're faceless to the world, to George.

Being at home, doing nothing, was never-ending limbo. Maybe in this instance, following an impulse was the right thing to do.

If you don't do this now, you never will.

You blame it on sleep deprivation.

You wake up that morning after and think it must have been a dream.

You check your phone. You find the flight confirmation email in your notifications.

You're going to London.

You want to look at everything in London.

But that's not the reason you're here

He shoots you a glance. One that's half-question, half-reassurance. You shrug, letting an easy smile tug at your mouth. Though there is something in your chest that is hurting.

Yeah, it's all too much.

STEP ???: You've gotten distracted somewhere here. Lost sight of the purpose of this guide... Let me just flip back a few pages, see if we can figure this out.

Oh! That's right, this is about London!

Which step are we even on right now?

Whatever, it doesn't matter, let's keep going.

Sight-see! Duh. That's the whole point of this very informative tour guide after all!

So whatever this step is, it's important that you sight-see, you see?

London has these red double-decker buses (they're hard to miss honestly) called Hop-On Hop-Off buses, named so for obvious reasons.

This London-viewing guide recommends if you decide to board one to sightsee that you sit at the top of the bus, right at the front and watch the city pass all around you.

To learn more about the wonderful city you're in, point at random shit and ask your handy tour guide what the hell it is you're looking at. If your tour guide is George, by the way, he probably

doesn't have a clue. George is a useless tour guide.

You can tell him this, but you may risk receiving a look that tells you he wants to hit you. If you were in a video game he probably would. You know all about that.

Unfortunately, this is real life and assault isn't exactly acceptable social behaviour.

It's a reminder that the two of you haven't quite figured out how to act around each other.

Things are different now and sometimes you find it easier when the two of you fall into characters. DreamWasTaken and GeorgeNotFound. Those guys can go back and forth with the snark and the wit and the dumb jokes for hours. But Dream and George, the real people, are on the cusp of something new.

Take photos of things you think your mom might like! Since she did ask for some when you hurriedly gave her the responsibility of watching your cat while you're away.

And also because you don't want to forget any of this.

Take pictures of George, captured mid-laughter, his eyes crinkled shut and his grin so wide and bright that it hurts to look at. Too much of a good thing and all that.

Go back to capturing a picture of a pigeon that's hitching a ride, perched on the row of seats behind you.

Laugh so hard you sound like a kettle and stop breathing for a worrying second when the pigeon flaps into the air and lands on George's head. It makes him scream like a girl. Scream like you've only ever heard over headphone speakers - loud enough to burst your eardrums.

Laugh long after of the blurred pictures you managed to take of his panicked, flailing limbs as he shoos the pigeon off. Mid-flail, eyes wide in shock. Your lungs hurt so hard after.

Engrain in your mind the look George gives you like he's trying to be stern but his eyes are soft around the edges. Smiling, despite himself.

Post the pictures of him mid-flail on Twitter. It's payback for the salt-coke thing.

THE BEST PLACES TO GO IN LONDON ACCORDING TO DREAM

— *(coincidentally also the only places he's ever been)*

THE TOWER OF LONDON is (according to Google) a 900-year old castle and fortress in central London that is notable for housing the crown jewels and for holding many famous and infamous prisoners. Basically, a bunch of bricks and shit that looks pretty cool and is old as fuck. There are guys in red jackets who stand as still as statues outside the gates, big fuzzy hats that make you snort in laughter.

George will tell you they're guards, but despite the big guns in their hands, they look too much like oversized toilet brushes to be anything scary.

You're more excited by the Bubble Tea shop that's a short walk away than this Tower.

Still, observing the Tower of London from a distance, George reads off Tower Fun Facts! And you try bubble tea for the first time in your life.

DID YOU KNOW - That at least six ravens are kept in the Tower at all times? For superstitious reasons — *I'm not lying! That's what it says here, Dream. Why would I lie about something as stupid as that? Look, read it for yourself!*

You're hesitant about your drink at first. Unsure about this mixture of milk and brown sugar, tapioca pearls suspended in the liquid of the cup. You squint in suspicion, green eyes narrowing.

George manages to convince you into a careful sip.

"Oh!" You're surprised. Looking from the cup to George. He's giving you an *'I told you so'* eyebrow raise because he's spent the better half of five minutes telling you that it's good. It's not your fault you're still not over the salt-coke thing.

"Good?" His happiness is infectious.

"Yeah! Really good! What did you get again?" You ask, squinting at George's bright-yellow-orange-coloured drink.

"S'like... mango fruit tea."

"Is it good?"

"Try it!" George offers his cup to you. You lean forward, sipping from it, still in George's hand. Your warm palm resting over the top of his to guide it to you.

You pull away, unsure of the taste.

George clears his throat. "Erm, what do you think?"

He's gone a little red from the cold - maybe the two of you should've gone for hot drinks instead of cold ones.

"I don't know... I think I need another try of it."

ST PAUL'S CATHEDRAL has a 257-step climb that leads you up within the great dome, where you'll find perhaps the best accidental man-made tourist attraction in London. (You listen in to a passing tour guide explain it).

Due to the specific design of the cathedral's dome - sound carries across what is known as the Whispering Gallery. You can say something here and be heard by someone on the opposite side of the dome's space.

Imagine how many people have stood here the same as you are now, how many sweet nothings, carefully worded secrets, how many can you hear me?'s have passed along the curving wall.

The tour group and their guide move on, back down the 257 steps. George stands by your side.

“Wanna try it?” You say. He grins and you walk away from one another, around the dome until you stand parallel.

Below, voices echo and bounce up to meet your ears. Above, a painted mosaic watches over. It’s stunning. But your focus is on George. Taking a step back, you stand close enough to the wall of the dome that your back is flush with it. Far from the rail that has views to the grand cathedral floor below you.

“Hello, George.” You try, voice low.

You hear his pitchy laugh of surprise.

“I can hear you!” He says back. It’s strange how the sound feels when it reaches your ears. Like an echo. Words you aren’t supposed to hear. You think of whispered secrets, you don’t say any of yours.

“Dream? Want to know a secret?” George’s voice wraps around you, filling the entire space. You wonder if this place can whisper your thoughts too.

The power of a whisper is it makes you stop in your tracks. More than a shout or a scream or a yell. You have to force yourself still to listen.

“Yes.”

You do not expect anything serious.

But a flame akin to hope ignites in your chest. Wishing, wanting, wondering. You cling to it.

“Are you sure?” There’s something tinny and unreal about his voice, if you couldn’t see George standing across the dome from you, you may find yourself believing in ghosts.

The matchstick flame is burnt down to your fingertips, an almost burn. Not yet blistering skin.

“George.” Your gaze is set on him, you just about make out his smile.

“Just making sure... okay, here goes...” He takes a deliberating, deep breath.

Silence draws out.

You wait, watching, his hands come up to his mouth and... he blows the biggest raspberry you’ve ever heard in your life. It bounces around the dome like a ricocheting bullet. You didn’t need a whispering gallery to hear that.

He gets cut short by his own giggling, it cracks you up, hunched over and gasping.

The flame has gone out on its own. Something light like relief floods through you.

“What was that?” You get out between uneven breaths.

“I couldn’t think of anything to say!” He cackles.

“I hate you.” You say. It’s not even half the truth.

“Love you too, Dream.” He tells you back.

No pleading, no donations tricking him. He says it all on his own.

“Let’s get out of here before we’re kicked out.” You swallow the lump in your throat. You’re not sure you can handle the Whispering Gallery any longer.

He’s closest to the stairs, waiting for you there as you circle around to him.

Almost there and you spot a yellow-coloured post-it stuck to the wall. It stops you in your tracks. In some stranger’s hasty scrawl there are words that make your chest tight and palms warm.

the whispering
tells me there’s a wanting

the whispering
Is soft and sincere

You take the note, fold it up and slide it into your pocket. For safekeeping.

THE LONDON EYE is one of the city's most popular attractions.

It’s also the spot where Sapnap decides he’s had enough of being left out of this trip.

The door has barely sealed you into the glass pod before your phone is lit up and vibrating, Sapnap’s contact name popping up.

You answer.

“Facetime me now!” He exclaims.

“Dude, we’re in public.”

“Put headphones on then! I wanna be a part of this vacation since no one bothered to invite me!”

“George? You have headphones?” You aside to him and his curious frown.

George pulls his wallet from his pocket and digs around until he finds a wired cable, handing it to you.

“Show me London, show me London!” Nick repeats, voice loud against your ear. “Give me a second nimrod, I’ll call back.” You tell him quietly, hanging up.

Mindful that you’re in a small space with other strangers you head to the glass wall and beckon George over.

“Sapnap wants to see London.”

“Why?” George wrinkles his nose.

You shrug, lugging the headphones in and offering him one of the buds. He has to step close to put it in his ear without it falling out.

“About time!” Sapnap tells you both when you answer the FaceTime call prompt he’s already spamming you with.

George leans over, face in front of the camera, it’s hard to get the both of you in. You’ll have to move, rearrange yourself so your shoulder is behind his and his side is pressed to your chest.

“Hello.” George greets Sapnap. You jump a little when some of his brown hair brushes against your chin. It smells fresh, the same floral-scented shampoo you borrowed from him this morning.

“George!” Sapnap yells. Depending on how loud your own Sapnap is you may have to hastily lower the volume so he doesn’t deafen you.”I can’t believe you’re hogging Dream all to yourself.”

“You can have him, he’s kind of the worst.” George pulls a face.

“Next time you invite yourself to London Dream, invite me too! That’s best friend rules.”

“Sorry dude. Next time.” You manage a chuckle.

“It’s all good. I’ve had to kick you both out of the Dream Team, obviously. But you guys understand, right?”

“What?” George scoffs.

“Yeah, it’s called the Sapnap Team now. I’ve been taking applications on Twitter. Karl seemed pretty happy about it.” He smirks, pixellated face alight with amusement.

You guffaw. “Sapnap Team sounds terrible.”

“Hey! I’m working with what I’ve got here.”

“Well, it’s shit,” George adds. He turns to face you, closer than ever, to gauge your agreement. You barely manage a nod in reply. This close, it wouldn’t take much to tilt your faces together.

But he’s already turned away.

“Whatever... I didn’t come here for your opinion on My superior team. I wanna see London!”

“Sure.” You flip the camera, doing a slow pan view of the view from The Eye, George sways by your side to keep the earbud in his ear as Sapnap *ooh’s* and *aah’s* appropriately. You end the scan of your surroundings by panning close to George, right up in his face.

“And this Sapnap is the most spectacular view at all!” You chuckle.

“Ew, George close up! He’s ruining the view, Dream. Now I never want to come to London.”

You turn the camera back to your own face, mock outrage taking over your expression. “That’s so rude Sapnap. George is beautiful! I’m showing you all the sights of London and this—” You thrust the camera back in George’s face momentarily. “—Is definitely the main attraction.”

“You’re so annoying.” George rolls his eyes, unaffected.

Sapnap’s laughter fills your ear.

“On that note, I’m gonna go. Send me pictures! Though not of George, obviously.”

“Of course. Those one’s I’ll keep to myself.” You say.

Sapnap hangs up after screaming bye so loud your ears ring a little.

The wheel continues turning. You haven’t paid nearly enough attention to the skyline as you intended.

“You think they’ll let us go around again?” You ask George.

He shakes his head, grinning.

THE SHARD is currently the tallest building in the United Kingdom. At the height of 310 metres (1,020 ft).

Like a shard of glass, it cuts through the heart of London, rising above all it surrounds.

It makes up, for all the sights you missed when you weren’t looking on The London Eye.

From the top, you can see the whole of London. The winding Thames, Tower Bridge, Big Ben. right across the river back to the Tower of London.

You know you have a dumbstruck look on your face as you stare at it all. This is even higher than the London Eye, the world below even tinier. You turn to George to share the wonder, he’s already looking at you.

“This is…” You say.

“Yeah.” He replies, as equally awed.

George looks away before you do. The sun will set soon. It’s low in the sky and light shines, illuminating him and you.

You wonder what his searching eyes are looking for beyond the glass, to London below.

Leaning against the railings next to him, you’re shoulder to shoulder. You want so badly to know what he’s thinking.

“I don’t think I’m used to you yet,” George says eventually. It’s not quite a secret, not like your own. Held close. But it’s a confession.

“What do you mean?”

He shrugs, embarrassed now.

He doesn’t explain what he meant by that.

You want to say so much. But you don’t. Not yet.

Chapter End Notes

chapter song — london boy by taylor swift

i have this old book on gothic architecture that belonged to an architecture professor who passed away. my uncle had piles and piles of his books in his garage for whatever reason. there was enough to fill an entire library. books towering everywhere, shelf-less.

to the point, i've always been fascinated by old stone. the minster near where i live is currently in the process of getting many of the old limestone features replaced - they've been eroded by weather and time and a fire, unfortunately.

i think about how much work it takes to carve each stone, to cut away with hammer and chisel. the dedication and patience to not strike down that hammer a slight too harsh and ruin days, weeks, months worth of work.

did you know that in early norman period work the chisel was very rarely used, instead ornaments were worked in with an axe.

imagine the precision necessary to make each mark, the strength and patience to ensure you don't end up with dust and ruin.

why do we continue to rework old stone? even though we know that time will only continue to ruin our efforts?

for ourselves? i suppose. so that we can continue to marvel at something someone many years ago thought to achieve. to continue to admire the craftsmanship and beauty of the long-dead past.

the point is, i got way too caught up in thinking about gothic architecture to then only spend about three seconds mentioning it in this chapter. i have too many thoughts and nowhere to put them.

thanks for reading :)

mystery

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

George isn't sure what to make of Dream. Which, he supposes is an unusual thing to think about his best friend.

Still, that knowledge doesn't stop the uneasy feeling that won't leave him.

Even as they spend more time together, George doesn't find himself getting any more used to it.

He cannot begin to express his thoughts (George has never been good with words) but there's something here. Something sitting in his ribcage.

Growing with every new second, every first glance, every spot on their grand-old tour of London.

Outside of the Tower of London, Dream tries bubble tea. Sharing a new experience with George, a new expression as he takes his first sip - surprise and delight in the widening of his eyes; bright-eyed wonder.

I'm not used to this, George thinks. Not for the first time, and this won't be the last. His brain is in pieces, trying to put together a puzzle. Matching a voice he knows intimately to a man of form and shape and substance.

Dream gestures wildly when he talks - as though the simple exaggeration of his voice when he tells a story is not enough. These movements are a part of Dream. (His substance has always been, George has simply never been able to grasp onto any solid matter until now.) The mysterious vapour that once was his best friend fills out and solidifies in front of his very eyes.

A day ago, the only way George could remind himself that his best friend had a body attached to him was the way he sounded over the other end of a mic, as he stretched or laughed or scratched his stubble close enough to hear it. And George was forced to reckon with the idea that there was a place, a house, a room in which Dream existed. Filling up space.

Those calls, talking shit, falling asleep on the line together, where he'd hear Dream's every inhale, exhale, close and sharp in his ears. As close as George thought he could ever get.

Nothing could have prepared him for the real thing.

How Dream taps his foot while they're on the bus, the way he snaps his fingers when he remembers a forgotten fact or thinks of something important. The way he'll wince to himself mid-thought, in memory of some embarrassing moment or thing he's said. How even when Dream's not speaking his face can convey a whole journey through the twitch of a brow or quirk of his lip.

Dream is human sensory overload. George tries to ground himself. To not look too close to the sun. Because he knows if he gets too close, he'll burn, or fall out of the sky or whatever the hell happened to Icarus. A real Greek tragedy.

He confines himself to solid ground and discards his wings of wax and feathers. Down here he can bathe in the warm-golden rays of the sun for as long as he likes without worrying about the burn.

In St Paul's Cathedral, there is much space for secrets. They fill the hollow dome and echo around

him. George can almost hear them, the whispered words of those who stood here before him. He wonders if he should give them another.

He wonders if the Whispering Gallery has heard all the secrets the world has to offer or if there are still more out there, waiting to be spoken into existence.

George has nothing to say. The walls hear his silence anyway. Sometimes the words we don't speak or louder than those we do.

Looking up at the painted dome, it's hard not to have your breath taken away. It took nineteen years for these scenes of saints to be completed. A labour of love. A great, laborious undertaking by someone dedicated enough to stick with it to completion. What a daunting task that must have been. To start something new, not knowing how it will turn out in the end. All-consuming desire and the struggle (the passion) to keep going.

It's certainly a wonder. George lets his gaze linger.

He wonders what Dream knows of journeys and beginnings and all-consuming things. If he thinks of these things as George does.

George didn't realise how unprepared he was to meet Dream until that time was already upon him.

How much deliberation did it take to plan out the biblical scenes of St Paul's? How much time was born between the initial sketches and those first brushes of paint?

Four years of knowing someone is barely anything really.

A day ago, the most George knew of how Dream looked was photos from when he was a kid. Blond hair and a gap-toothed smile.

He thought he'd be eased into this. (There was a plan, once) First a photo, maybe a video call, then hopefully in person.

The deep ends fine though, unlike Icarus, George is a pretty great swimmer.

Dream stands across the other side of the dome. *He's waiting for a secret.*

George has to squeeze his hands tight and force himself back into his body. There are a million things he could say, should say. They're not even secrets, more things he's never had the courage to say out loud. Does Dream know how thankful he is they met all those years ago?

He thinks of missed connections. How inevitably, despite that unanswered first message, they became friends anyway.

He treads this water steadily. The only thing that could possibly send him under the plunging depths is a whirlpool or a riptide. And those types of things are one-in-a-million, right?

A million things to say and George says none. How do you pick what comes first?

Stupid, immature humour is a foolproof failsafe that George knows well.

He keeps his secrets tied to him.

Dream laughs, stupid and cackling and maybe it's worth saying nothing for that. To see Dream in full motion.

He wants to find every excuse he can to see the way he sways, full body shaking. The choking expanse of his chest and the hand that comes up to grab it, as though he needs to hold onto himself.

"I hate you." Dream gasps out.

And George has to say something, a thank you for all Dream has given him.

"Love you too, Dream." He whispers back.

This, George thinks, cannot be a secret. George loves Dream. He may not always say as much, but it's true.

He stands across from his best friend in the world, who came all this way for him.

Love doesn't always have to be expressed in as many words George thinks most of the time he gets the message across fine.

All those times he's stayed up skimming through Dream's code to fix bugs. The hours of the day they spend talking. The dumb games he learns how to play because Dream has spent the past month playing nothing else.

Love comes through the songs they recommend to each other. Even in the silence, when there's nothing left to say but still, George stays. Comfortable in their own quiet. The messages they send - four different conversations being held simultaneously.

It's the food they order each other when they know the other hasn't eaten in twelve hours. How even in conversation with other people, George thinks of Dream.

He thinks the distance balanced it all out, that the space between them allowed him to breathe outside the all-consuming entity that is Dream. He doesn't quite know what to do now that distance is no longer there. He doesn't have to wait for a reply or call, Dream's glued to his side.

They shared a bed last night!

Every interaction demands an instantaneous reaction. Dream is here! And he is so much more than George expected.

Dream's laughter echoes in his ears.

"Let's get out of here before we're kicked out." Dream says.

There are things George wants to say without having to confess anything.

Or, what he means is to confess without having to say anything.

The Whispering Gallery does not hold the power to speak your secrets for you.

Only you have that power, yourself.

George has been on the London Eye only a handful of times in his life. With his family when he was young, on school trips, once on a date with a girl where he didn't know what to do with his hands and he'd had an awful haircut the day before that made him insecure and twitchy.

It's different now, he's already seen the view. Desensitised to the great expanse of it. London, big and old and new and ever-changing. The sky is consistent at least, cloudy sunlight spilling between thick-white clouds. Grey and bright, on the perpetual verge of rain.

There's a growing darkness building, nothing much to worry about yet.

Sapnap calls and distracts him from the weather.

Dream's close against his back, he stays that close after the call is done. Arms and hands around George's waist, enclosing him in a casual hug.

It shouldn't feel so stifling, to be within Dream's hold, right?

Maybe George isn't much of a hugger, he's not overly affectionate, especially in public. He feels itchy thinking about it, how Dream seems so content with this. So naturally open.

He's caught off guard, wants to pull away, but he doesn't shove Dream off. As Dream's chin comes down and rests against his shoulder, breath warm and tickly against George's ear and cheek.

"What are you doing?" George asks as he struggles through uncharted territory.

This is so close to the thing that sits in his ribcage that it hurts.

Dream sighs. Another exhale of warm air to George's skin.

"Is it weird to say that I've missed you?"

"How can you have missed me?" George manages to laugh, despite the uncertainty consuming him. This is the first time they've ever met.

"I don't know, feels like I've been missing you is all. I'm glad I'm finally here." He says, voice nothing more than a low whisper.

"Oh," George says, stumped.

One of them moves, Dream or George. Both. Because Dream nudges the side of George's neck as they shift. When he exhales, George feels it all the way down his spine.

Heat rises up his neck, awkward, warm itchiness emerging all over again. He's embarrassed - though the word doesn't quite fit.

Caught off guard is the closest to the truth he dares get.

Finally, the London Eye completes its cycle and Dream lets go.

They stand at the top of The Shard. A view of the city. Everything in front of them, around them.

George thinks he knows what being close to Dream feels like.

When he was a kid, his mum and dad had one of those big CRT televisions. A massive boxy thing that sat in their living room where George and his siblings would watch films on tapes. And he remembers him and his sister sitting with their faces pressed to the curved screen, feeling the staticky buzz against their skin. Giggling with laughter as they took turns to see who could stand it the longest.

Being with Dream is like that, his skin is alive with static.

They're not touching now, not like on The Eye. But even now, with Dream nearby. He feels the same.

"George?" Dream's voice brings him back to the surface of his thoughts.

"Huh?" George replies, eloquently.

"Where to next?"

"Erm, I dunno. Are you hungry?"

"I could eat." Dream shrugs, easy as always.

To dramatise the events that follow, George begins as such: They step one foot out of The Shard and it starts absolutely pissing down. Rain that bounces off the pavement. Rain like sheets. They're soaked in seconds and it's actually the worst. The two of them in an instant must look like drowned rats.

They leg it to a nearby bus shelter - exposed on one side but shielded above their heads. Huddled close like penguins to conserve heat.

The sound of rain on the plexiglass above them is almost deafening.

They're joined by a man in a long overcoat who huffs and sighs at the rain as though his disgruntlement alone will stop it. As though the weather has turned awful just to piss him off in particular and make him wet for Very Important Business. He scowls at the opposite side of the shelter, turning his shoulder against George and Dream and staring angrily at his phone.

Dream's in hysterics, water collecting at his jaw, droplets clinging to his eyelashes and the top of his nose. Head tilting back in laughter, George watches how when his eyes squint shut the dewy wetness rolls down his cheeks like fresh tears.

"It's raining!" He's excited like a puppy, grinning stupidly. It's all so very unfair.

George has to actively force himself to make a snarky comment in reply. His brains stopped working effectively - waterlogged probably.

"No? Is it really Dream? It never rains in London, I couldn't have guessed!"

"I like rain! Sue me asswipe." Dream snarks back. He shuffles foot to foot. Not ever standing still, the rain giving back the energy that a day of sightseeing would drain from any ordinary person.

"Doesn't it rain all the time in Florida? It's the same thing." George shrugs. Not impressed. He can feel water beginning to trickle from his hairline down the back of his neck, sending a cold chill down his spine.

"It's different. *Sooo* different, this is London rain!" He's annoyingly chipper for someone with hair plastered to their head, soaked like they've been dunked in the ocean.

"Same thing," George repeats - teeth chattering with cold.

"George, have you experienced Florida rain before?"

“Well, no.”

Dream’s taken on a tone of voice, and George knows from experience where it’s headed. They’re both stubborn, and Dream won’t give up until George concedes.

“Exactly.” Dream cuts him off, anticipating a retort. “I’m the cultured one here and as someone with experience of both, I’m telling you! It’s different.”

“Cultured? Don’t make me laugh Dream.” George actually snorts, gaping at the sheer brilliance of his best friend’s claims of being cultured.

“I’ve been to more places than you, that makes me more cultured!” Dream insists.

With Dream, even when deep down he knows what he’s saying isn’t true, he won’t give in.

“You’re so…” George gives up. He can’t believe he calls this idiot his best friend. It’s unbelievable actually. Where’s Sapnap when you need him?

“Handsome? Amazing? Better at Minecraft than you? The bestest friend in the world?”

“Annoying.” George scoffs with exasperated finality.

“Those other things too though.”

“Oh-kay.” George mocks. “You wish.” He adds for good measure.

London rain is heavy and icy cold. It can last for hours, days before there is relief. On other occasions, it sticks around for all of five minutes before the sun peaks through the clouds. But from the look of the growing dark clouds, George has a feeling it’s going to be a long while before this rain stops.

They can’t spend all day and night in a bus shelter.

That’s just asking to get mugged.

The guy in the peacoat seems to concur, he gives an almighty sigh, then turns his collar up and begins speedwalking away as swift as his legs can carry him.

“I think we should make a run for it.” Dream says.

They’ve been huddled for a good few minutes now. George is freezing and from the way Dream’s got his arms wrapped around himself - he is too.

“Or we could get an Uber and not get absolutely soaked.” They’re already pretty wet, but the rain hasn’t seeped all the way through his layers yet. He’s not trying to get any more drenched than he has to.

“George.” Dream says in that slightly patronising ‘oh come on now’ way he has.

“What?” George replies flatly.

“Come on.” There it is. “Where’s your sense of adventure?”

“Sorry I don’t want to have hypothermia by the time we get back.”

“Don’t be a baby. We’re soaked already!”

George's eyes roll. "That's stupid though. It'll take us forever."

"We've been in London for less than twenty-four hours and even know it's not that far."

"We're getting an Uber. Or I'll find the nearest Tube station. You can run around all you like, Dream. Knock yourself out." George pulls his phone from his pocket.

"It's only a little rain, look!"

Dream steps out from under the bus shelter, into the open street, and rain immediately pours over him. But he's grinning madly despite the state of his now sodden clothes. The rain and hair in his eyes.

Unpredictably (though maybe George should have expected this one) Dream grabs him by the elbow and pulls him out into the pouring rain.

"Dream! What the hell! What was the point in that?" George shouts, trying to escape but Dream keeps firm hold of him, using his other hand to grab George's jacket so he's made to stand in front. Switching them around so Dream's blocking the bus shelter. He looms over George, using his height to his obnoxious advantage. Water falls over them, Dream's grin is sharp, George notices his pointed canines, the little gap between his front two teeth.

"Y'know, I don't think any Uber driver would let us in their car if we're dripping all over the seats. He grins, those white teeth bared in full evil enjoyment of his victory.

George will win the next one, he vows to himself. Someone has to reign Dream's ego in.

"You're—" he sighs and doesn't finish his thought. Dream already knows all of the names and insults that sit at the tip of George's tongue.

"Fine. But remember this was your stupid idea." Which implies, if I get hypothermia and die, it's on you.

"Won't forget it." Dream winks.

They begin their mad dash home with a readying glance at each other. George leads the way as they race past equally harried-looking pedestrians, feet stepping through freshly formed puddles.

There's no need to run, they're beyond drenched now anyway, but it feels like a race. Adrenalin pumping through George, slipping into the cathartic, base need he has (has always had) to beat Dream at his own game. A familiar nostalgia going all the way back to their early friendship. Playing Hunger Games with Sapnap or trying to outmatch each other on a PVP server. The sheer elation that came with winning. The determination that came after losing made him want to try all over again. Sitting coiled in his chair long after his parents thought him asleep, whispering into a shitty, peaking mic.

The sun would be rising outside and George would know in a few short hours he'd have to go to school without any sleep at all. But there was no regret, never. He'd do it all over again the next night.

Voice squeaking but not as much as Dream's or Sapnap's were. Being slightly older and yet the same as them, despite the accent and the ocean between them.

It was addictive, the games and those interactions. Fuck. It probably still is now. He's never exactly broken the habit. His friendship with Dream and Sapnap sitting at the centre of his world.

Where this long train of thought ends, is that George will never get old of trying to beat Dream.

They splash through puddles, and kick water at each other, George shoves Dream into a puddle so deep his shoes are submerged completely.

“Watch it!” A stranger shouts, after Dream in retaliation, kicks water at George with all his might and splashes them.

“Sorry!” He winces, face gone red.

They’re stalled when they come to a stop at traffic lights. Waiting for the green man to let them cross. But then it’s on again.

Dodging Londoners and tourists like it’s a game. Laughing until they’re dumb with it.

The sky has darkened quickly now that the rain seems to be here to stay, the wet ground reflecting the glow of the streetlights. George watches their shadows ripple underfoot. Growing and shrinking as they race under the light and the rain to keep up with one another.

He’s surprised when he feels a tug on his arm and turns his head to find Dream gripping the cuff of his coat. With a glance, he finds Dream’s eyes wide and welcoming. He offers his hand properly. Their wet fingers grip one another as they forfeit their race and decide instead to walk the rest of the way together.

Breathing heavily, Dream leans into his side.

“You think you can drown from swallowing too much rain? Because I swear my lungs feel like they’re full of water.” He gasps.

George shakes his head. “I doubt it.”

“How much further is it?”

George narrows his eyes.

“I think you might have been right about getting an Uber.” Dream admits.

“No, this has been way more fun than getting a car would have been.”

Dream doesn’t gloat or announce his victory like George expects him to. “It really was.” He says instead.

“They’ll probably let us on the bus if you don’t want to walk the rest of the way?”

“Okay.”

They find the next nearest stop. It doesn’t take long for a bus to pull in, George’s hand waves out to signal it.

It’s full to the brim of wet, rain-coated people. George shuffles Dream into a corner, their hands above their heads to hold on as the bus begins moving.

“Today was-”

“I think-”

They both start and stop at the same time, speaking over each other. They sway with the bus's motions, a centimetres distance between them.

“What were you going to say?” George asks.

“No, you first.” Dream encourages.

“Today was fun.”

“You know we probably should’ve like, filmed some stuff today. For Content.”

“I guess.” Dream shrugs, not looking all that into the idea.

“Have you seen everyone on Twitter theorising about you face revealing soon?” George asks, partially because he himself wants to know what Dream is thinking.

“Yeah. I was... I was thinking maybe we wait. I mean the plan-”

“-The plan that you completely disregarded by coming here.”

“Yes. I think we should still stick to it. You’re still coming to Orlando eventually. This trip is...”

“What?”

“Well, it’s just for us. It’s why I don’t really want to film anything. We’ll have so much time to do that when you get your VISA. And when you and Nick move in. So I think this should just be a you and me thing. My fave reveal stays until then too. Keep everyone else mostly out. I mean, we could stream a thing or two, but the rest...”

George nods, taken aback by how vulnerable Dream seems talking about this. “Okay.”

“Okay.” Dream relaxes back into himself.

He forgets to ask what Dream was going to say.

They get back to George’s flat with slow, well-tired steps.

Dream’s hair is a dark-tawny brown from the water, fringe stuck limply to his forehead. Stumbling up the set of stairs to George’s flat, gasping as though they’ve run a marathon.

George spends too long struggling to get his key into the keyhole with his slippery fingers. The cold and the adrenalin has made him shaky.

“Are you good?” Dream chuckles, still breathless.

“No, I can’t get the stupid key in properly.” George whines.

“Here, dumbass.” Dream’s hand wraps over George’s cold-numb digits. Together they get the key in and turned. “It isn’t rocket science.”

“*Ooh, I’m Dweam. I’m so smart. Blah blah, it isn’t rocket science.*” George turns his embarrassment into something pointed.

“George! I was being nice. Would it kill you to say thanks?”

“Thank you, Dream, for forcing me to run around in the rain, thanks to you I’m so cold I probably

have frostbite.” George rubs his freezing fingers together, hoping to retain some body heat.

“So dramatic.” Dream mutters.

Still in the doorway, waiting for another pointless wisecrack to drop, George decides to be the bigger person and slip past Dream, into his flat.

They’re on the same wavelength as they remove their shoes by the door, then their squelching socks. Jackets following next shoved onto the radiator near George’s TV stand.

George’s cat takes one look at them, dripping onto the floorboards and turns on her haunches, meowing softly as if to say, come find me when you don’t look as though you’ve gone for a swim in the Thames fully clothed.

Directing Dream to his bedroom, George goes into the bathroom and grabs towels to dry off with. They can have proper showers tomorrow morning, for now, George can’t stand being wet anymore tonight. Plus, he’s starving and putting off eating for any longer than necessary sounds awful.

Daring a glance in the bathroom mirror, George finds it’s pretty much what he’d expected. He looks both pale and red-faced. Colour reddens the tip of his nose and his ears, cold stinging his skin, but he’s got the dark under eyes and pale skin of someone who needs sleep. Quickly looking away, he takes the towels and heads back to Dream.

George’s door creaks as he pushes it open.

Dream’s shirtless by the bedside, leaning over his suitcase to grab a fresh change of clothes. George blinks. Dream’s back muscles shift as he picks a t-shirt up, disappearing as he turns to face George. This is more of Dream’s skin than he expected, pale and freckled all over. His shoulders and down his stomach. Where his pants are low slung on his hips, there’s a trail of hair that disappears where he’s covered over. He’s narrower at the hips than he appears when covered with his oversized t-shirts.

“Oh, thanks!” Dream smiles brightly.

George is standing in the doorway.

“For the towel, George?”

“Oh! Yeah, no problem.” George hands a towel over.

Retreating to the opposite side of the room, George pulls open a set of drawers, looking for some comfortable pyjamas and maybe a jumper to keep him extra warm.

Turning on an angle away from Dream, George is quick to shuck off his shirt. Though he struggles in removing his sweatpants, which in the downpour have become almost glued to his skin. They’re easier to get off than jeans would have been at least. Eventually, he rids himself of them, down to his boxers.

Scrubbing the towel against his scalp, George dries his soaked hair and skin.

There’s a self-consciousness to being mostly naked in the same room as someone. He’s never been one to compare himself with others but he finds himself glancing at the broad, effortless stroke of Dream’s shoulders.

George used to be able to get away with being a line of straight limbs when he was a swimmer and

it meant he was at least built of lean muscle. But nowadays he's a lanky length of torso and legs. With pale skin that's gone red where the towel has rubbed against his frame to dry.

Once dry enough, he changes into his clean, dry clothes. Pulling his jumper on over the top. It's nice and big, falling long at his knuckles so he has to roll the cuffs over. Cosy, though.

Then he's ready, turning to face Dream who is no closer to getting ready, Still shirtless with the towel over his shoulders.

Looking over in George's direction a little like he's been devastated. Tired and vacant. George snorts. It's his own fault if he's tired from their race in the rain, George has no sympathy for him.

"Are you getting changed or standing around in wet trousers?" George laughs and Dream shakes out of it, looking sheepish.

"I'm drying my hair!" He huffs - rubbing the towel against his damp head for emphasis.

Moving on, George picks up his wet heap of clothing from the floor and manoeuvres it to the washing basket, another thing he'll have to sort out tomorrow.

When it feels safe, he turns his attention to Dream again. He's got a threadbare-looking t-shirt on, it appears soft to the touch. A t-shirt that may have once upon a time been worn during the day but now, with age, has been designated as sleepwear.

It's certainly old looking, with a fading Hard Rock Cafe Orlando logo across the front. He's shoved sweatpants on too, these distinctly ordinary. Part of Dream's usual wardrobe when he's sitting around doing nothing.

"Food?" Dream asks though the question is rhetorical. Food is without question. George's stomach rumbles in agreement.

Sitting on the floor in front of George's TV, their backs resting against the sofa as they devour a Nando's that George had ordered them. George cross-legged and Dream's outstretched in front of him, crossings at the ankles of his sock-covered feet.

It's late, but not too late. Some Channel 4 gameshow is playing, George is as sure of what it is as Dream, he literally never uses his TV unless it's to connect to Netflix or YouTube.

"I was thinking." Dream begins, taking a moment to pop a handful of chips in his mouth. British chips, not the American ones they call crisps here.

"You think?" George raises a brow.

"HaHaHa." Dream mocks after swallowing his fries. "I was thinking, even though I don't really want to film anything while I'm here. We could do a stream? Keep everyone happy and fed."

Voice exaggerated, George says: "*Minecraft But We Share A Keyboard, in real life?*"

"Sure, I'm down for anything."

"Of course you are." George nudges Dream's thigh with his foot.

"I guess you won't be able to stream properly while I'm here. With the facecam and everything." Dream considers.

George shrugs, nonchalant. "It's worth it if I get to stream with you."

Dream's mouth opens and closes. His brow coming together like he's struggling to find his next words.

George waits, taking a bite of his chicken wrap to fill the growing silence.

Then, someone says something funny on the TV, the live studio audience burst into loud hysterics that make Dream snap from his stupor. He coughs into his hand, looking away, red colour rising to his cheeks. George doesn't know what he's missed.

"Anything with you is always fun." Dream splutters out, shoving a British chip into his mouth.

George grins, summing the behaviour up to the strange reality of this new situation. Having Dream here is new for both of them after all.

Chapter End Notes

chapter song — mystery by jesse jo stark

love takes many forms.

bonus song: talk by coldplay

when it rains, it pours.

little bit

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

There's a point after being full and tired and happy when you have to make a move. From the couch that's giving you backache to the bed that seems oh-so far away. George doesn't want to move. He's too comfortable. But he knows he'll regret it, that they both will if they don't.

Dream's all stretched out next to him, taking up more of the couch than is necessary. Areshole. Passed out in an exhausted coma of sleep. He's actually snoring, head tilted back and mouth hanging open. George is tempted to take a video of it, it could definitely be used as blackmail somewhere down the line. Even if he does end up only sending it to Sapnap.

Then Dream stirs, clearly not as deeply asleep as George assumed. Rousing with a sharp inhale. His mouth closes, brow furrows and his limbs stretch then relax with an almighty sigh. After a long second, he opens his eyes.

"George?" His voice is a rolling rumble - barely intelligible. But George's heard enough of it over the years to understand.

It's 1 am, so much for fixing their sleep schedule.

"Hi." George greets, voice small. He feels small. As though the world around him is too. Captured in this intimate little bubble, with the TV playing something muted in the background. Light flickering across the room, a blur of moving pictures and colour. Dream reflects all of it, the whites of his eyes reflecting most of all. Glittering with white-blue light. Making the shadows of his eyelashes darker, the curve and bend of his nose sharper.

There's near-distant London traffic noise. A universal constant. Sirens and passing cars. If you listen close enough, the occasional voices of people still passing on the street below, not quite drowned out by the white noise of the city and the groaning creak of the old building, settled deep in its foundations.

It all feels so far away from here. In the quiet comfort of George's flat with Dream an arms reach away, spread carefree on George's couch.

The times he had tried to imagine Dream in London, George could never have pictured this. Not the simple pleasure of mundanity. How Dream fits right into the dip in the couch, not a part of him out of place or awkward about it. Truly, when he had tried to imagine Dream in London, there had always been a blank nothing, because it seemed out of the realm of possibility.

The focus had always been getting to America. The Florida sun, in a big house with Sapnap moving from Texas to join them together as roommates.

Not this. Never this. The unreality of it is unsettling. Dream on George's couch, relaxed and sated by food and company.

George's cat purrs rhythmically where she's curled against Dream's side, boxing him in with no escape. One of his hands sits idly on her soft fur.

Dream makes a peaceful humming sound, his head tilting sideways, hair smushed on one side against the pillow. His gaze falls to the walls of George's flat, to the half-empty bookshelf with more knick-knacks than actual reading material.

Looking around as though he's making sense of it, knitting together George's space and George.

For Dream, who knew George only through pixellated webcam footage, the view of a single bedroom wall and an unmade bed.

His gaze follows the layout of the room. Sometimes, he spares George a sneaky look. He knows he's being watched and he's checking George is still watching too. Lip quirking upwards every time he catches George's eye.

"Did you know 65% of UK homes contain at least one magnolia wall? Bet you didn't." George blurts out. The sticky embarrassment that usually consumes him doesn't. Not in the bubble. It's safe here.

"Why would I know something as pointless as that?" Dream gives him a look suffering look.

George grins lazily.

He feels as though he's being studied under a microscope, under the weight of Dream's passive stare.

How strange for Dream to be here, George wants to ask what he's thinking of, what he thinks of the framed 'Visit Tatooine' poster on George's wall, the collage of photos with friends and family George as given by his sister on his twenty-first birthday.

Does he see it all? Does it help fill in the gaps and paint the full picture? He wants to know if it's the same for Dream, if every new piece of information feels like a missing puzzle piece you find under the couch cushions. Though the picture is mostly complete, you get a little more of the detail. A missing line or corner. A splotch of colour that makes a transition complete. One step closer to the last piece.

The difference between people and jigsaws is there is always going to be missing pieces. You can play yourself open for someone and still, they won't know the full story.

George's cat stretches a paw out, body moving as she unfurls, letting herself stretch and sink against Dream's side more than she already is. Warm affection grows in George's chest, he looks at her and Dream and they smile together.

Yeah. Their own little bubble.

At 2:30 am the contemplative peace is interrupted. A friendly fire attack, from their trusted allies Karl, Quackity and Sapnap. Phones light up, assaulting the silence with messages and calls.

George answers a call from Karl in begrudging acceptance.

"What?" He coughs out, words cotton thick in his throat. Dream shuffles closer and George puts the phone on loudspeaker so they can both hear.

"George!" Karl's shout emerges from the tinny iPhone speaker.

"Karl." George responds, drawling and resigned.

“George! Where are you?”

“What are you talking about?” *He’s right here at home with Dream.*

“My stream! Sponsored by Hot Pocket’s. Tee-Em! They’re tasty and convenient.” Karl cries, continuing to fulfil the requirements of his brand deal with Hot Pockets™ who are paying him lots of money to say this and also kinda because Hot Pockets are good. Especially (Karl’s favourite) the Philly Steak and Cheese ones. Not that George would understand the delightful experience of eating one, filthy Brit that he is.

“Oh-kay.” George over-enunciates his clear disgruntlement at Karl’s not-so-subtle product placement.

“Hello, Karl.” Dream leans towards George’s phone.

He smells like rain and sleep.

“Dreamie!” The noise is deafening. Is this how it feels when he screeches in videos? Surely not.

“Hi!” Dream greets again, smiling with his teeth even though no one but George can see him. Unlike George, Dream is always happy to be a part of someone else’s bit. “Are you streaming right now?”

“My wonderful Dream, yes I am! Say hi to chat! Quackity and Sapnap are here but don’t say hello to them. Just me and chat.” George wonders if he can calculate how many Monsters Karl has chugged before streaming today, maybe he can start a chart for it.

“Hello chat! Not hello to the rest of you.” Says Dream.

“You guys coming on, or are you boring losers?”

They share a glance.

George shrugs.

“Sure, we’ll drop in for a while.”

“YEAAAA-” The call ends abruptly. Oops, George totally didn’t mean to do that.

George looks at Dream. But not with the relaxed, comforting lens of the bubble. That slipped away the moment the real world slipped back with that phone call. He hopes his look conveys, what have you gotten us into?

“I thought you didn’t really want to do much streaming while you were here.”

“It’s different. It’s Karl, God knows what he’ll have us playing but we’ll stick around for an hour or two. You know you want to.” Using his shoulder, Dream shoves at George who shoves back with a huff.

“Tired.”

“Nah. You’ll feel left out if you miss those idiots being... well, idiots.”

“I hate that you’re right.” George closes his eyes and blows air out of his mouth.

Standing, Dream stretches tall, his back clicks, hands coming down to rest against his hips as he

waits for George to make a move.

George needs to boot up his PC, accumulate a chair for Dream to sit on and wake himself up enough to participate in stream nonsense. Though maybe reckoning with the nonsense will be enough to shock him into focus.

The bubble may be broken but that does not mean George wants to leave the warm comfort of the couch. Dream stands, looming, like a tall, annoying dimwit.

“Up.” He commands, raising a foot to kick George in the shin.

After a few calculated seconds, George stands slowly. Not because Dream said to, but because he felt like it and actually he was uncomfortable anyway and— yeah. Whatever, George doesn’t even believe himself.

He stands because Dream asked and George isn’t as vindictive as he’d like everyone to think.

Dragging a chair from the kitchen table, he puts a pillow on it to cushion the cheap wood and sits Dream in it. It’s a difficult fit. The office chair George uses is bulky and the armrest is in the way. But George moves his chair to the side allowing Dream to get close to the desk.

He pulls Karl’s stream up whilst they wait for Discord to quit being a piece of shit and load.

it’s jackbox with the boys!! (you know who). The title says. Dream reads it out, eyebrow raised. They don’t seem to have started playing anything, Karl’s talking in full-cam mode with Sapnap and Quackity. Chat messages flying by in a frenzy of spam and general Twitch Chat-ness.

“I only have one pair of headphones.” George frowns, picking up the black wireless over-ears he usually wears when streaming - hardly useful to two people. There are the wired headphones they used while out earlier, but they’re not exactly convenient to share while streaming.

“I think I have my AirPods, I used them on the flight. Hopefully, they have charge left.” Dream shoots up, heading to where his bag is dumped next to George’s bed, kneeling down and digging through it.

Discord finally decides to open and George joins the call - staying deafened whilst Dream returns with the little white AirPod case. They fiddle with connecting them to the Bluetooth on George’s PC. It connects, the charge is thankfully full and Dream hands George a bud to put in.

They undeafen to raucous laughter, it joke they’re a few seconds too late to hear. It takes a moment for any of their three friends to notice they’ve joined.

“George!” Quackity greets them.

“Ello!” George replies in an overexaggerated lilt of his own accent. He tucks his feet under himself, pulling the mic stand so it’s better centred between him and Dream. Quackity’s going on about something, sounding overly excited and George shares a look with Dream, only half-listening.

He meets George’s eye readily. Dream flashed a smile before turning away to face George’s monitors.

“Hurry up guys! We’ve been waiting forever.” Karl’s exaggerated whine fills the one earbud.

Guffawing, George replies: “You only told us about this like, ten minutes ago!”

“Hurry!”

“We’re joining, give us a second.” Dream chuckles.

George searches the Discord chat. “Have you even sent the code yet?”

“...Yeah, of course I have!”

Taking a glance at Karl’s steam on his second monitor, the slight delay shows his wide-eyed reply, hands flying to his keyboard as he presumably finds the code to send their way.

“So you’re not just sending it now?”

“Uh, no? Me? No!”

“Karl! I’m literally watching the stream.”

“He’s lich-rally watching the stream, Karl.” Quackity mocks. In an imitation that is not at all accurate to how George sounds.

On his other monitor, Karl’s chat seems to have broken into its usual chaos, including repeated spams of *‘it’s real’*, *‘dream’s in london!’* and variants on *‘whAJAHKJLDFA’* which Karl’s moderators seem to be having a hard time deleting efficiently. Occasionally, messages of *‘CHAT CHILL’* fly past. It doesn’t seem to be doing anything to diffuse the chaos.

“What’re we playing?” Dream asks, conversationally.

“Quiplash first. For sure.” Karl answers as George receives the game code to join.

“What do you guys think about me and George answering together? Like as one player?” Dream leans forward, speaking up to the mic. This close, George notices there are sleep lines on Dream’s cheek from where his face was pressed against the couch only minutes ago. An indentation that probably matches perfectly to the cushion left behind.

“Then there’d be two of you answering, total unfair advantage,” Sappnap complains, they hear his chair squeak as he leans against it.

Quackity cackles. “Like either of them are funny enough to win on their own. They’ll still lose together.”

“Oh yeah?”

“Yeah!” Quackity says, entirely serious.

“Bring it! We’re going to win this just for you.” Dream’s eyes flash, competitive streak flaring up, his face changing to a smug grin.

George has Jackbox pulled up on his computer, he enters the code as he clicks on the box to enter his name, Dream bats his hands away.

“What?” He frowns, Dream ignores him. Typing away on George’s keyboard until the name DreamNotFound is written inside the box.

“You’re not putting that.” George exhales, though he’s already accepted the truth. Dream is a

taunting little shit.

“What?” Sapnap asks.

Dream smirks and presses enter.

Shoving Dream’s hands away from his keyboard with a perfect aimed swat, George has to laugh. He’s fueled chat for the entirety of the night now, there will be no end to this.

Karl and Quackity cackle. But the stream hasn’t yet seen it. Because Sapnap’s apparently having trouble typing out a four-letter code and his own username.

Once he’s in and the code can be leaked, Karl shares the Jackbox screen with the viewers. George doesn’t even have to glance at the chat to know what he’ll see. He gives Dream’s evil grin an eye-roll. So stupid.

As the game begins, George mutes their mic so they can talk about their answers freely. Without revealing anything to the boys and the chat.

“Oh god! Your mouse is backwards, George what the hell?” Dream grabs at the mouse in sudden realisation. It’s on the left-hand side of the keyboard, the side Dream sits on. He should know this, George has mentioned it numerous times. He supposes it is different actually seeing it when you’re used to the normal way.

“I’m left-handed, idiot.”

“No shit. This is freaky.” Dream wiggles the mouse back and forth with his left hand, cursor bouncing around the screen. He goes quiet, focused on watching the cursor loop and glide, his fingers clicking the inverted buttons, he uses it to open and close Firefox.

“Can we play Quplash or are you just going to waste time watching a cursor move?” George asks.

“Oh, yeah. That’s what we’re doing.” Dream’s focus turns back to the Jackbox prompt that has appeared for them to answer. “No way is that an actual prompt.” Dream gasps as he reads what has appeared on the screen.

George frowns, reading quickly. *‘Damn it, I failed No Nut November because of ____.’*

“Oh my god.” George’s laughter hiccups.

“Okay. I have the perfect answer.” Dream takes over the keyboard, typing out his response.

“Dream,” George whines as he reads it back. “You’re just farming votes from chat with that.”

He was quite simply written out George’s username.

“That’s the whole point! It’s a solid answer, trust me. And anyway there’s no time to debate it, we’ve gotta do the next one.”

As reluctant as George is to admit it, Dream’s right. The viewers will definitely vote for it.

Despite some more arguments over what to put for each answer, they get through the rest of the prompts efficiently. Until the time comes to unmute. Their prompts are about to go up against the others. With chat deciding whose is the best.

“Good luck, good luck. Except you George, fuck you.” Quackity says sweetly.

“Rude,” George mutters into the mic, cut off as Karl reads out the first prompt appearing to the viewers.

‘As Shakespeare once said...’

And it’s going to be a difficult round for the voters what with the answer *‘i just fucked george’s mom and it was awesome!’* going up against *‘and Fuck that bitch Rat. i never liked her.’*

“Who even put that?” George gawks, only somewhat surprised. It’s clear that no one can resist using him for votes. He’s just that influential. A side effect of dealing with these people he calls his friends is growing unfortunately used to their shenanigans.

Everyone cackles, Dream wheezing beside him. George shoves Dream’s shoulder with his own, as Dream did to him in the living room.

It’s inevitable really, George could have bet his life’s savings on it.

Sapnap screeches in victory. Yes, it’s now clear, *as Shakespeare once said I just fucked George’s mom and it was awesome!* Is the winner.

Quackity groans. “C’mon chat!” Clearly disappointed that his dig at the beloved pet of BadBoyHalo did not win over the hearts of the people.

“Sapnap, what the hell?” George reproaches. Not offended, but its kind of a lazy answer, there’s no creativity at all.

“See!” Dream asides. “Pandering always wins.”

The next round begins soon after. And the prompt *‘Damn it I failed No Nut November because of ____.’* appears on the screen.

Dream and George smile confidently, the win is in the bag with this one.

Their answer appears first. *‘GeorgeNotFound’* in all of its voteable, pandering glory.

Quackity practically howls, George sighs in resignation. Karl and Sapnap don’t even try to stifle their laughter.

“Trueeee.” Karl sings.

Unexpectedly, what follows may just shake up Dream and George’s easy win.

‘Dream and George Gay Moments Compilation’ appears in the second answer box.

It’s perfect. The definition of a flawless answer. Engineered immaculately to farm viewer votes. And despite the foothold *‘GeorgeNotFound’* alone may hold over a signification portion of voters, the opposition’s absolute banger of an answer is undoubtedly superior.

It wins out in the end after a glorious, glorious battle.

Chat roars with the fuel that has now been shovelled into its fire by the bucketload. Flames high and deadly.

“Whose answer even is that? That is so unfair!” Dream laughs and scorns simultaneously. Entirely hypocritical considering all of their answers are also just as obvious pandering to the viewers.

Karl is practically choking on laughter, so it's fair to assume he's the culprit.

"I hate you, Karl." George groans.

It's a landslide victory.

Damn it I failed No Nut November because of Dream and George Gay Moments Compilation sits proudly on the monitor.

"That's a Quiplash bay-be!" Quackity hollers.

The rest of the stream continues its chaotic trend. Highlights include: *'A twist to make a Maid Cafe even more interesting would be ____.'* Featuring similar but obvious answers of *'My Meow Meow George'*, courtesy of Big Q. And *'Catboy Maid Quackity'*, from the minds of George and Dream.

In a surprise twist, *'Catboy Maid Quackity'* wins the popular vote. Mainly due to a victorious attempt to sway the votes from Karl. Partially affected by Quackity's outraged fake crying through an autotune filter because George threatened to play a clip of Q meowing on stream.

A personal favourite Quiplash of George's is the prompt, *'The award for Dumbest Person In The History Of All Time goes to ____.'* In which Sapnap writes *'The person reading this.'* And Karl's answer is simple but effective: *'Sapnap.'*

Karl is the clear winner of that one.

With a wince, Dream announces: "My back is killing me." He stands in the centre of the bedroom, eyes tracking George's movement as he swings from side to side in his office chair, heels planted to the ground.

"Sucks to suck."

"You could have offered to swap seats, asshole."

"I'm not a mind reader. You could have asked."

"Would you have said yes?"

"Well, no."

"So rude. Did your mom not teach you any manners?"

"No, my mum did."

"British people. You're the worst."

"Americans." George retaliates.

Dream's in good cheer, despite the time and the amount of energy exerted today.

They left the call not long after Karl ended the stream. Though if they wanted they could have stayed for another few hours chatting to the boys who were still there when they left. But Dream was growing uncomfortable and George tired. The time reads 4:18 am on his phone.

Standing, he mimics Dream's stretch, his own back is hurting from sitting so long. Then he heads to the door, scrubbing a hand through his hair and across his face as he goes. Rubbing carefully at his eyes which are burning from staring at a screen for so long. Dream follows him out.

The other room is as it was left. Almost completely dark, the television emitting its blue light across the room. Highlighting the disarray they left the couch in. George avoids it, stepping towards his darkened kitchen. There's no reason to be in here. He's not hungry and the tile is cold beneath his feet. Except, George wants to stand somewhere, to breathe in the cool night air from the open window.

"Are you tired?" He asks Dream."

"Exhausted." There's a droop to his eyelids, to the downwards slant of his shoulders, a body that has given up holding itself together.

"You can go to sleep if you want."

"No." Dream's eyes close and he leans back against the counter. "Not yet." Hair messy, feet bare. He's back-lit by dancing light. The not until you do is implied.

If George closes his eyes, it could feel reminiscent of any number of conversations they've had over the phone. Both tired and without much to say but lazy fragments of sentences. Sighing at one another as a reminder they're still awake. They're motionless like this for a long time that is possibly only a couple of minutes. Time stretches and blurs and disappears altogether.

George is reminded of Dream humming a song he's listening to on his end of the call. Of his own keyboard taps. When time passed by through tiny, unimportant things.

The kitchen is dark, quiet and a little too cold. Outside a car's brakes squeal. The kitchen window is wide, letting in the night air and noise.

George tugs the sleeves of his jumper down so they cover his hands.

The only noise comes from the kitchen sink. Leaky tap dripping away, it doesn't stop no matter how tight you turn the handle. Dream is motionless and George doesn't know what to do with himself. With his hands which are cold and his body that is restless.

At least through a phone call, he couldn't see how little he had to say.

Stood in George's kitchen, it's way too early or way too late depending on how you look at it. Pointlessly stood. Because Dream said no, I'll wait for you.

George doesn't know what he's waiting for.

What happens now? George is unsure. He's not had the time to consider how to fill these moments, the hindsight to realise they would ever occur. If he could have had time to play this all out in his head before it happened then maybe he could come up with something.

Now he's stuck.

"George?" Dream whispers. Drawing him away from his thoughts and back to the present. The tap drips twice, a loud pitter-patter against the metal basin. Ringing too loud in George's ears, almost drowning out Dream's voice altogether.

It doesn't feel real, doesn't feel like he's actually here.

George hums in recognition he's being spoken to. Eyes not quite focused.

"Can I hug you?"

This snaps him back. Dream watches, green eyes dark in this lighting. Expression carefully set, jaw tight and yet something so fragile in the expression that it makes George not want to do anything to break it. He parts his lips to reply but the words get stuck. He nods instead.

It feels awkward, though it shouldn't. George doesn't think anyone has ever asked him for a hug before. They are, in his experience, something fleeting, something you do to say hello or goodbye. Like when he greeted Dream in the airport with one. Or his mum's warm embrace when she comes to visit. Sometimes like she's trying to squish him back down to the size of the child he once was. Dream steps towards him and George is rooted in place.

It's like this.

Dream sways into his space in a fluid motion. Arm's wrapping around George's back and pulling them chest to chest. George leans forward and Dream's neck bends, head pressing against George's shoulder, reminiscent of their half hug on the London Eye. Now a hand rests on the small of George's back, the other holding where his neck meets his shoulders, fingertips brushing against his hairline. George lets his arms settle around Dream's waist.

It's nice here, warm and easy to lean against someone. Dream's breathing is even with his. Breath warm against George's neck. Still, George is unsettled. Because as bright and full and whole as Dream is in front of him. And though the memories of today are in sharp technicolour in his mind. He can't make sense of this.

The surrealism of Dream's soft fragility and the cold kitchen floor beneath his bare feet. Of Dream being here with his fingers at George's neck and the way his loud voice went so quiet when he asked, of all things, for a hug.

"Dream?"

The man in question pulls back.

"Are you real? Are you actually here?" George swallows. He wants to shove the words back down his throat. But they've already clawed their way out. Too late.

Confused, Dream frowns. "Of course, I'm here. Who else would be hugging you right now?" He squeezes his arms a little tighter. "This isn't a dream." He smiles at his own joke.

George snorts but steers the conversation back where he wants it to go.

"I just... I can't get it out of my head wondering why you're here. The plan was I'd go to you in Florida. It's all planned out. And you showed up here. I don't know, maybe it's just been a long day. But it feels like something I've made up."

He pulls out of the hug now. Dream's hands fall away, lingering after George even as they fall apart. Following George as he sways backwards.

George's hands find their own grounding purchase against the counter behind him.

Dream remains close, unsure of where he stands.

"I— I don't know what to say. I wish I could explain. I want—" Dream looks away, blinking

quickly. He swallows like he's holding something down. "—I guess, I impulse bought that ticket. Like what I told you before. I know this isn't how it was supposed to be. But... I wanted to see you, I wanted you to see me." He wrings his hands together, fingers sliding against themselves.

"You could have FaceTime'd me. Might've saved you a dollar or two." George manages.

"That would have been the logical thing to do. But I think I just work in extremes, especially with the people that I—I love." Dream swallows, eyes wide.

George thinks about how Dream does everything like it's with his last dying breath. Persevering where others would falter, chasing after his dreams when someone else would give up. How the few times they've fought with sharp words and brutal jabs, he won't back down. How Dream would fall to pieces just to prove himself.

"This is harder than it could have been, isn't it?"

"It's okay." George smiles. It feels like a grimace but he hopes it's convincing enough. "I'm just, trying to make sense of... all this. You were just a voice for so long. Now you're this whole person. I know you've always been a person, obviously. I'll feel totally fine with you here one minute and then the next..."

The next moment it consumes him. All of this is difficult, an unusual, un-George-like show of emotions.

"Whatever you want me to do, I will."

He wants to know what it is Dream isn't telling him.

George isn't an idiot, not completely. He's not oblivious enough about emotions to not recognise when someone is holding something back. But he doesn't want to ask.

He's not entirely sure he wants to find out.

The tap drips, pitter-patter. The night air remains unchanged. Dream stands in front of George. As real as he can ever be.

George escapes to bed, Dream following after.

Covers shift, the bed dips. There's a carefully constructed distance that separates them. The only light in the room comes from Dream's phone as he types a message to someone.

Soon enough, he locks his phone and puts it on the side table next to him.

George falls asleep with too much on his mind, relieved when exhaustion wins the battle over him.

He dreams of a man in a porcelain mask. Tied back with pale-blue ribbon, done up in a bow that is hidden by tufts and curls of golden-brown hair.

Wearing a deep green cloak that covers his shoulders. Hood pulled back as though it has fallen down in a cool breeze. Clasped at the front by a simple loop and button, it covers the dark, black-purple of shining armour.

In his hand is an axe - this gleams that same deep colour as the strange metal he wears. A blade razor sharp, he is a man who cares deeply about his tools.

Precipitation in the air moves around this solid figure.

He tries to grab hold of the space around them. Bring it into focus. This may be some sort of open field, though it's too foggy to see. He can't make out the ground below his feet. It's all a grey, rainy blur. The air sits too close. He has to blink the wetness from his eyes.

The man moves first, two steps forwards. Up close, through the fog, he can see that the white sheen of the mask is not quite as perfect as it seems. There are hairline cracks and a poorly repaired clean break that runs through its centre. Offsetting the crudely drawn smile. Lines not quite matching up anymore. The man says nothing. The hand not holding the axe reaches out. Despite the armour and the heavy cloak, the man's hands are bare. Calloused and scarred and unwavering.

Grey, they're surrounded by grey emptiness and nothing else, as though time and space has seized around them, suspended. The man reaches out. His own searching hand reaches back.

Taking the hand he is offered, it is cold and wet and unassuming. The rainy mist stills, no longer falling. Simply sitting in place in the air. Droplets glisten all around.

Then, they are falling.

The ground, if there ever as any, has opened up beneath them. The figure's grip stays strong and firm in his.

With nothing but wet air around them, they plummet together.

Chapter End Notes

chapter song — little bit by lykke li

friends can offer us a new perspective
even if it is a stupid one.

bonus song: stuck on the puzzle by alex turner

a Dream is a wish your heart makes.

just like heaven

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Day breaks and it's still raining. In fact, it's pouring. Loud against the window panes, with the wind brazen enough that it wails with every hearty gust.

Dream is already awake. Propped up by pillows and looking at his phone. It's unclear whether the rain and wind woke him or if he emerged from sleep of his own accord.

Not trusting his voice yet, George waves a sleepy hand above the quilt in greeting.

The room appears grainy or perhaps George's vision is blurred and he needs to rub at his eyes and rid them of sleep.

"Hey." Dream greets lowly.

Clearing his throat of some of the morning rasp, George asks: "How long h've you been'wake?" Entire vowels are missing, clearly, the cogs in his brain are not turning yet.

"Not long. Twenty minutes."

One of Dream's hands comes down short of the top of George's head. Missing his messy hair by mere centimetres, he almost wonders... but Dream interrupts the thought with a question. "Want to hear what trend last night?"

"Go on then." George's head is heavy against the pillow, looking up at Dream.

"*SAME MIC* - YouTuber Dream proves fans who didn't believe he was meeting up with fellow content creator GeorgeNotFound wrong when they appeared on Karl Jacob's stream Jackbox together."

"They have a lot of trust issues," George whispers, letting his eyes fall back shut. It's really too early to keep them open. Though if George were to guess, it's around lunchtime at this point. He could sleep for another few hours if Dream wasn't here.

The wind whistles outside. Dream laughs at something, chest moving with the force of it. George can feel the shake of it through the mattress. This is new.

"What?" George mutters, opening an eye.

"Nothing. Something funny on Twitter." This is something he's used to.

"Oh." George doesn't care enough to ask to see it, he knows Dream's laugh well enough to know when something is really worth seeing.

"My mom sends her love by the way." Dream adds.

"Tell her I said hi, or the same, or whatever you're supposed to say when a friend's mum sends their love."

"You're so awkward."

George stares hard at the dimple that's appeared high on Dream's cheek. "What am I actually supposed to say to that?"

"I don't know, you just make things, like, so much more awkward than they need to be."

"Whatever. You're awkward." George refutes, turning his head away in revolt.

"Okay, George. *I'm* the awkward one." Dream's sarcastic tone falls over him and George elects to ignore it.

"Glad we agree."

He can feel the eye roll Dream levels at him, it's that palpable.

When he does look back (because he can't resist) Dream's crooked smile is ready for him. Something so honest about it that it hurts to see.

"What do you wanna do today?" He mumbles.

"Nothing. After yesterday... not move from bed for twenty-four hours." Dream shrugs. George hears the rustling of fabric and movement as Dream sits up more comfortably.

Here's Dream, aloof and lovely with his hair all mussed and head tilted as he regards George.

"We could do that." He agrees, breathlessly.

"We could?"

"Who's gonna stop us?" George makes Dream consider.

Dream gives him a contemplative look. "True. Let's stay then, for a while."

He feels it for a moment, fingertips brushing against his scalp, weaving through strands of hair. His eyes flutter shut for that half-second of contact. But the touch is fleeting. Disappearing before it has truly begun. It was unfortunately accidental, as Dream moved his arm from where it was laid over George's pillow, back to his side.

It scares him that his heart is racing, feeling so close to Everything he's been feeling around Dream since he arrived.

George breathes out firmly.

"Do you have your laptop?"

"Yeah." George doesn't elaborate. He knows where it is, but has no energy to bother explaining it. Hopefully, if he stays quiet Dream will think he's fallen asleep and George can continue quietly observing him and how nice it felt that half-second Dream's hand was in his hair.

"Well... where is it?"

"What do you want it for?" George grumbles.

"I don't know, watch Netflix, put something on YouTube maybe."

Sighing, George gestures vaguely. "It's in the drawer, my side of the bed."

There's a pause, a good long one. Dream makes a little huffing noise. "Can you get it please?"

"No thanks." It would definitely be easier to get it himself. George doesn't move.

"George, you're closer than I am."

"You're the one who wants to watch something."

Dream sighs loudly, resigned. George tries not to gloat in his satisfaction, even when Dream mutters, "*so difficult*" loud enough that George is clearly supposed to hear.

Moving, the bed shifts under Dream's wait, sinking close to George's side as he leans over to get the laptop. A knee stabs into George's ribs.

"Ow." George's eyes go wide.

"Oh, I'm so sorry, I was trying to get the laptop but this huge nimrod is in my way. My apologies." Dream's such a dickhead.

George scoffs, properly miffed at being assaulted in his own bed. One of his hands rests against George's shoulder, anchoring him to the bed as he leans precariously towards the bedside table, pulling open the top drawer.

"Couldn't you have walked around like a normal person?" George maintains his scowl.

"That wouldn't have annoyed you nearly enough." Dream grins sharply.

The top drawer rolls open, George hears a bang as the laptop knocks against something on the way out. With the laptop in hand, Dream plonks himself back onto his side of the bed, enough to make the mattress bounce, and George with it.

"I hate you."

"Nah, you don't."

Completely awake now, George glares at Dream. Sitting up, though keeping the quilt pulled up to his chin, watching Dream as he opens the laptop.

"Password?"

"Let me type it." A hand emerges from the covers and makes a grabbing gesture.

"Just tell me, I won't switch or use it for anything nefarious." Is it something embarrassing?" Dream guesses, pulling a face.

"No, you just can't know all my secrets."

"George, you wish you were that mysterious." Dream passes him the laptop anyway.

He types in his password quickly. It's Alohamora. Nothing that embarrassing, all things considered. He just being obstinate about things for no reason.

"Thanks, you don't mind if I look through all your secret folders, right?"

"You wish you knew what was in my secret folders."

"So you have them?"

Scoffing, George replies quickly. "Obviously not. You're the one who suggested I did in the first place."

Dream opens Google, there's a handy saved Netflix bookmark to click on.

After scrolling for what seems like an eternity with George complaining the entire time, they settle on *The Office*. The both of them have already watched it all together, but it's easy to follow on a day like this.

He doesn't know if it's the rain outside, or how warm and comfortable he feels, but George could stay here forever.

"Every time I watch this I wish Pam and Jim would get together quicker." Dream says.

"What? The best part about Jim and Pam is how long it takes."

Dream looks at him. "It's annoying, it's like so clear they're into each other."

"That's the worst take. It's never that easy." George says, as though he's sage on all things love when he knows he doesn't have a single clue what a real relationship is like.

"Whatever, I'm impatient. It should be."

They watch for a while longer until Dream gets bored and starts clicking around, taking online quizzes.

"Would you rather sleep in a room that's too warm or too cold?" Dream reads from the screen. George has a strange feeling they've done something like this before, years ago on Discord sharing the screen, reading the prompts and judging each other's answers. It's a strange nostalgia. It reminds him of how long he and Dream have known one another.

"Too cold. Cos then you can make yourself warm with blankets. If you're too hot then what the hell are you supposed to do except like, suffer."

Some of the questions are dated to pop culture references that happened years ago, which makes George think they've definitely looked at this exact page before.

"What? This question is so dumb. Would you rather fight a wolf with your bare hands or fight a large bear with a sword?"

"Why's it got to be a large bear? Why not a medium-sized bear, or a small one?"

Ignoring George's very poignant question, Dream continues. "How are either of these better than the other? Either way, you're probably going to get mauled to death. Like that bear is gonna just swipe the sword out of your hands and *boom* dead."

"That is dumb. Click one I want to see what people said."

"Twenty per cent for the wolf and eighty, *eighty per cent*, for the bear."

"I guess the sword could do some damage."

"Well, yeah but those eighty per cent are definitely still going to die a stupid bear-related death."

"Idiots. I'd win though, with the sword."

"I'm sure you would."

Dream clicks past a few boring ones.

"Zombie apocalypse or alien invasion?"

"Um. Zombies, that'd be cool. We'd have BadBoyHalo on our team, so we'd be winning."

"Really? I'd say, aliens. That's so much more, epic. Like that could potentially change the world and not... end it."

"Like Star Wars aliens instead of aliens that are going to abduct you?"

"Exactly. Plus, it's already so much more likely than zombies are."

"Aliens?"

"Yeah. Maybe not in the sense that they're gonna actually arrive on a spaceship one day. But if the Universe is endless then I'd bet on something being out there, somewhere."

"Wow. So philosophical Dream."

"Are you mocking me? You are, aren't you?"

"I'm just admiring your optimism."

"Shut up."

Eventually, the peace is disturbed. George's cat wants something, be it attention or to announce her presence. She walks into the room and makes it known loudly by meowing incessantly. Only settling when she jumps on the bed and Dream allows her to rub her little face against his palm. Traitor. She already loves Dream more than she loves George.

"She reminds me of Patches." He whispers quietly, more to himself than George. They're so much a part of each other that maybe it's the same thing. The thought slips into his mind and he takes hold of it. Folds it in half then quarters and tucks it away somewhere it will get lost with all the other thoughts like it.

Rolling out of bed with an angsty groan worthy of a teenage girl on a school day, he ignores Dream's smug look. He's craving a cup of tea and some biscuits. Nothing new here.

Dream asks for something cold, scrunching his nose up at the proffered tea or coffee. So George leaves the warm sanctuary of bed to the cold of the rest of the flat. The main room is filled with static silence, only dissipated by the noise of the kettle after George flicks it on.

He turns to the fridge, raiding it for a cold drink for Dream.

"Want apple juice?" He calls back, stepping into the doorway of his bedroom. A hand tucked under the bottom of his jumper and flat against his stomach in a futile attempt to preserve body heat. As though this is some Arctic storm they are hiding from and not an average Autumn day in London. It's not really helping anyway, because while his hand is getting warmer, the bunched-up jumper is exposing even more skin and making him break out in goosebumps.

"Sure." Dream watches him, unblinking.

George turns away, frees his hand and grabs the unopened bottle of apple juice acquired last time his mum came and stocked the cupboards. She worries he won't feed himself properly if she doesn't provide the bare essentials on her visits.

Opening it, George pours a glassful.

For a quiet moment, as the kettle boils, George watches the street below his kitchen window. It's darker than usual for this hour, with the clouds shading the sky a murky steel grey. He's reminded of a dream, of falling through some grey unknown with a man in a mask. George doesn't dream very often and if he does he usually forgets them fairly quickly. This too will most likely be another he forgets.

Outside, something shifts in the clouds. The rains still pours but George has a feeling it will change before too long. British intuition - from having to seize the moments when the rain stops.

He rushes to finish making his tea, then tucks a pack of digestives under his arm. Glass in one hand and mug in the other. He returns to Dream, still surrounded by the quilt, limbs sprawled and laptop sitting beside him. Dream's smiling at some YouTube video he's playing. It's endearing, for whatever reason, catching Dream smiling like that. Off-guard and carefree.

"I was thinking, we should cook something tonight." Dream says in lieu of a greeting, his arm raises to take the glass from George.

"Cook?" George scrunches his nose up. He was planning on using the opportunity of Dream's visit to eat takeaway every night for the foreseeable future. He walks around to the other side of the bed.

"Yes, cook. Do you even know how to do that?"

Dream is unfortunately aware of George's eating habits. Truth being, he doesn't need an excuse to eat takeaway every night of the week. This is why his mum worries about keeping his cupboards stocked.

"I know how to cook." Dream sets the mug and biscuits down on the bedside table firmly.

"What, beans on toast? Or whatever weird shit you eat."

George ignores him. "No. I can cook... stuff."

"I feel like all I ever hear is you eating are those apple slices from McDonald's. Loudly. In the middle of the night."

"That's healthy."

"George."

"Fine, maybe I just don't like cooking."

"Okay then. I'll cook us something then."

"What can you cook?" He shuffles until he's turned towards Dream.

"You know, I make a pretty mean steak."

"Oh, I know that?"

"I've told you before."

"Well yeah, but I've never seen any proof."

"Then let me prove it! It'll be the best steak of your life. I mean apart from my mom's, I don't even know what she does to make a steak taste that good. You'll have to try it for real when you come."

"To Florida?"

"Where else."

He thinks about an empty room in a house in Florida with his name on it. The heat, the golden sun on Dream's skin, away from the cold shrug of London.

They settle into eating chocolate digestives. Dream's never had one before though he says they remind him of graham crackers (whatever those are).

He wonders if Florida is as hot as Dream describes, George has only ever experienced the heat of a British summer and he can barely stand a heatwave here. Florida would be a whole other story.

He doesn't know how accurate a depiction it is to think of sunbeds and sand, ocean waves crashing against blue-water beaches. Dream doesn't seem to get out and do any of that. The thought of the warm heat on his skin, Dream beaming as he splashes in crystal water burns bright in his mind.

"When I get there, we should go to a beach."

Dream throws him a raised eyebrow. We could go to Miami or like, Clearwater. There are a ton of tourist spots. Or a pool if you wanted to go swimming. Why?"

"Thinking about when I move over there. Though, obviously, I wouldn't just show up on your doorstep in the middle of the night."

"I didn't show up on your doorstep." Dream scoffs.

"Basically did."

Sipping his tea, George raises an eyebrow. Dream watches him carefully, expression shifting from amused to contemplative.

"You'd like Orlando. You'd look nice in the sun. Hot—It's hot—I mean. It's hot in Florida, different to here."

"Thanks, I think?"

"That came out weird. I just mean it's good for you. And as much as I like it here, London doesn't have nearly enough sun in it for you."

Well, that's... nice? George thinks.

He moves past whatever Dream's trying to get at. He doesn't think even Dream knows.

"Can we go to the theme parks?"

"Hell yeah. You'd love Universal. Remember a few years ago when I went around and recorded that video of Harry Potter World for you and you started crying."

George groans. "No, I didn't. I don't cry."

"Oh my god! Don't lie, you were in a call with Sapnap and he told me you started sniffing."

"I had a cold! He is such a dick, I can't believe he told you that." George insists.

"George, come on. Don't lie to yourself."

"Whatever." He takes a disgruntled sip of tea. Then adds: "Harry potter was an integral part of my childhood."

"I know. I'd love to go there with you."

George brightens. "We could bring Sapnap too."

"The Dream Team finally all together."

It would be nice, to see where Dream lives, to meet Patches. Strangely, he anticipates most of all the idea of seeing where Dream streams and records and talks to George every day. The mini-fridge full of water, the chair he sits in. The fidget spinner on his desk.

Constantly, he grasps for any new puzzle piece he can collect. It's lucky that Dream offers them so easily.

It may be a chair in a room, but George has embellished it with Dream in his mind. Where he sits when he's telling one of his stories or explains ideas for videos.

Dream now knows all the spaces George exists in. It would be nice to see Dream's in return.

"Hey, weren't you supposed to upload a video around now?"

George groans, leaning back until he's sunken into the pillows.

"George." George avoids looking at him. "You haven't even edited it have you?"

"I'm not to blame here. You're the one who showed up at Heathrow Airport while I was in the middle of it."

"George. You've had the footage for like a month now."

"You can't force me to edit it." George scowls.

Dream's face grows into a Cheshire Cat grin. "That won't work now that I'm actually here to make sure you do it. You can't ignore me spamming you about it now."

"What are you going to do? Tie me to the chair?"

They both pause, eyebrows raising. Dream breaks first into surprised laughter, George following after.

"Not like that!" He splutters.

"Wow George. I really didn't need to know you were into that sort of stuff. But okay." Dream's gone red with the force of air that has escaped his lungs.

Groaning, George scrubs his face. "Whatever. You can't make me do shit."

"I won't cook you a steak if you don't edit."

George considers, finds a flaw. "We don't even have the stuff in the make steaks with, so it doesn't matter."

Dream reflects, finds a resolution. "I'll sweeten the deal then! I'll go out, to the nearest store and buy everything while you at least start editing."

"I mean I've already started it. Some shit just needs sorting out." George sighs at the ordeal of doing some quick fixes that really won't take that long if he puts the minimum effort in to get it out of the way.

"Even better! See George, it won't even take that long. And you get a steak as a reward for your efforts." Dream gives him his most beguiling look. It's unfortunately convincing.

"Fine."

Dream shuts the laptop with a firm snap.

"This is exciting."

"You're going to the shop." George looks up from his phone where he's sprawled across the bed, face unchanging from the unaffected deadpan that has come across it.

"It's like a little adventure." Dream smiles, after a shower, he's rifling through his suitcase to find something to wear. It's still lying in status on the floor of George's bedroom. Despite George offering to borrow a few hangers for his clothes in the wardrobe and the suggestion that he could make space in some drawers.

"You're going down the street to find a Tesco." George watches, face blank, as Dream shuffles into a pair of black jeans.

"But I'm doing it by myself, like a— like a tourist!"

George can't help but laugh at him, his eyes rolling. "Yeah, the sights and sounds of Tottenham Court are really one to bear witness. I'm completely distraught that I'm going to have to miss it to stay home and edit this video in my nice, warm flat." he sighs, woefully. "Such a shame..."

Dream shoots an amused glance before pulling a sweatshirt over his head. "You should be jealous. You never know, some other British Minecraft YouTuber might sweep me off my feet and ask me to come stay with them." With the sweatshirt on and proclamation voiced, he stands waiting for George's reply with his hands on his hips.

"That would be such a shame. Then I wouldn't have to share my bed with some oversized American anymore, or put up with him hogging the bed and snoring." To make his point clear, George rolls over, spreading his arms and legs to show all the space available to him without Dream.

"I guess you wouldn't." Dream quirks an eyebrow, grabbing his beaten-up trainers and approaching the bed. He shoves George to make room for him to sit on the edge.

"All the YouTuber's in the UK live in Brighton now anyway. London is almost completely rid of them."

Dream considers, mouth tightening before he smiles. "Yeah, I guess it is just you then isn't it?"

Anyway, help me put the store into Google Maps before I leave."

"Pass me your phone," George tells him.

They get the walking directions put in, George handing the phone back with the location of a Tesco Express that's only a ten-minute walk away.

"Don't get lost, or ran over, or die or whatever," George tells him.

"Very reassuring. You're going to do your editing, yeah?"

"Totally. I'll finish it. Completely."

There's a beat of silence. Dream watching George, George looking at his phone.

"What?" George asks, looking up.

"I so don't believe you."

"Okay, look." George stands, to prove he's telling the truth. "I'll get my computer turned on and you can leave me here in front of it. Doing my editing." George sits in his office chair resolutely.

"Promise?"

"Yes now go away and get food."

Dream beams. "Will do."

Turning away, George makes a show of shoving his headphones on while Dream grabs his wallet and headphones.

"I'm leaving now."

"Okay. Bye."

He hears Dream snort, heading out of the room when George calls him. "Dream! Take a coat, it's still raining idiot!"

Through the open doorway, he watches Dream grab his North Face raincoat from where it's hanging and shoves it on over his sweatshirt. He smiles thoughtlessly to himself.

The perspective shifts, narrative changing as it follows Dream out the door, leaving George in peace as Dream plucks his AirPods from the pocket of his jeans, putting them in his ears before he exits the flat and walks down the creaking old steps that take him to the ground floor.

The rain continues its steady downpour, though it's much less torrential than when they got caught in it yesterday. Dream pulls up the hood of George's coat, lingering in the doorway to the street as he pulls out his phone from his back pocket.

He's got a call he's been meaning to make that will hopefully accompany him on his *Great Journey to The Supermarket*.

"Hi!" Sapnap answers quickly.

"Hello, stranger." Dream shoves his phone into his pocket, letting his earphones do all the listening for him as he heads left, not too worried yet about following Google's instructions. There's a few minute walk down the high street before he can turn off in any particular direction.

"Where are you? You sound weird."

"It's raining pretty badly, I'm walking to the store."

"Is George with you?"

The rain gushes along the side of the road, down into the gutters. Where the pavement cracks and dips, puddles have formed and Dream is wary to step over them in his gym shoes.

"Nah, he's editing. Thought we could catch up."

"We talked last night." He hears the pleased amusement in Sapnap's voice.

"It's not the same on stream. That was fun though."

"Yeah, it was. You and George planning on streaming anything while you're there?"

"Nah, probably not."

Weaving past a group of people crowding the pavement, Dream's foot lands right in the middle of waterlogged ground. His right shoe is soaked in an instant and so, in turn, is the sock and foot inside it.

"Shit!" Dream sighs. He might like the rain, but a soggy, cold foot is definitely not enjoyable.

"You good dude?"

"Stepped in a puddle." He mutters. Sapnap laughs at his misfortune. "Ugh, anyway, I wanna know how you've been dude."

"Fine. Great, even! Trying not to feel jealous that you went and left for England without me." His tone is wistfully, dramatically, tragic.

"Sorry." Dream tells him. "I know I should have said something before I left."

"It's okay. I'm just confused about why you did it, dude. You're, crazy. But I didn't think you were buy an expensive ticket to another country last minute, crazy."

"I dunno... I just did it." Dream says quickly. "I'm clearly crazier than you think."

"Dude, you're really not." Then because he won't let things lie, Sapnap says. "Tell me what's up."

He sighs. "I can't explain it. I just... did."

"Y'know you don't have to bullshit me how you probably did with George. I'm not as oblivious as he is." Sapnap confronts.

“Nick...” Dream trails off. The rain drips from the hood of George’s coat and splashes against Dream’s nose, collecting at the tip. Sliding down his cheeks, running down and wetting his lips.

Sapnap waits for him to reply.

“You know why.” Dream edges around the truth with gritted teeth. Forcing his words out, stopping short of anything meaningful. The problem with knowing Sapnap inside and out is that he happens to know Dream as well too. Starting from a Minecraft server years ago, *123 to Team* and a shitty Skype connection.

“*Then say it.*” Sapnap pushes, always urging. His biggest supporter. The air is still despite the rain. The backdrop of a wet London street has faded away. He hears only the white noise in his ears as Sapnap waits for him.

“You clearly already think you know.” Something coiled tight feels as though it has snapped inside of him, unbearable tension finally at breaking point. Dream snaps. “Why should I say shit?” He finds himself agitated, this close to the truth of it. He wants to run away. Back to the warm flat where George is waiting, back to this morning with George in bed. Safe and happy as long as he didn’t have to think about it.

He can’t avoid it now.

“*Because I don’t think you’ve even said it out loud to yourself yet.*” Sapnap’s voice is distorted and quiet, be it from the rain, the shitty connection or the rushing of blood in Dream’s ears. Confronted by something he doesn’t want to hear.

He comes to a stalled stop outside a worker’s cafe advertising bacon sarnies and one-pound-a-cup coffee. The shutters are only half open, an apron-wearing lady smokes in the doorway. Sapnap’s words ring in his ears. Dream’s hands long to find something to be distracted by other than the way they hang uselessly at his sides.

He has no vices to help him.

“No.” Dream swallows carefully. “I haven’t.”

“*How are you supposed to say something to George if you can’t even admit it to yourself?*”

The woman in the doorway gives him a vacant stare, takes one last drag and drops her cigarette onto the concrete step, squashing the ember burn with her shoe. She ducks under the shutter and back inside. Dream breathes in the choking scent of cigarette smoke and wet petrichor.

“I’m not telling George.”

There is a pause, long enough that Dream worries the call has somehow disconnected.

“*What the hell is wrong with you?*”

Dream winces. “Jesus Christ. Dude, chill.”

“*Dream what is the point in you?*”

He wants to go back to George’s flat where it’s warm and quiet, curl up in bed and watch *The Office* or take dumb quizzes that make George giggle, his grin bright. Where he’s not quite daring enough to touch George in a way that is more than an accidental brush. He wants apple juice and chocolate-covered digestives and he’s perfectly happy watching George’s sleep-tired expressions

from a distance. He is.

“You went all that way Dream! You fucking love him so much you crossed an ocean to meet him and now you—”

“It was a mistake okay!” Dream breathes heavy, eyes burning. “I can’t do it. I— I meant it when I said it was impulsive. I shouldn’t have done it. I was fucking drowning at home.”

He thinks of the sweltering heat and tangled sheets, restless nights of thinking and forcing himself not to. “I could barely think. I thought if I didn’t do something about it I was going to fucking burst!”

“Dream...”

“I had a moment of weakness and I bought a one-way fucking ticket!” He thinks of that night, his and George’s conversation, engraved in his mind even as he tries to push it as far away as he can.

He wishes now he could take a hammer to it, to himself. Smash it to pieces and grind the part of him that loves George to dust. The overwhelming guilt of wanting to spill his guts. How a call was never enough. It’s like a fever dream now, the state he was in and it had lasted too long before he got a grip back on reality, so long that he was already on an aeroplane about 33,000 miles from turning back.

Reality is like a plane crash in the ocean, one where George doesn’t feel the same, doesn’t even really want Dream in London with him.

“I got on that plane and something clicked in my fucking head. It was too late. I couldn’t do anything.” Stuck in a mistake he’d brought upon himself. “I wanted to hop on the next flight back to Orlando and pretend nothing had happened. But then I was here already and maybe it was a mistake but I still wanted to see him. I needed to...” He grasps at air.

Running a hand through his hair, his hood falling back off his head. He doesn’t bother pulling it up. Letting the rain fall and wash him of all the fear and love that seizes him. “I’m not doing it to him. To all of us. I’m sticking this out because he’s my best friend and of course, *of course*, I want to see him.”

He hates his own weakness. How happy being with George makes him. But fuck, he could have saved himself a hell of a lot of hurt if he’d just kept his distance. It was selfish coming here, caught up in the idea of a single late-night conversation with George. Caught up in the belief that George would see all of Dream and tell him what he desperately wanted to hear.

That’s not them, not who George is.

He needs to remember his role, the part he has to play.

It feels like it would be easier if they weren’t friends at all. If Dream hadn’t been so intrigued by that dumb British voice and his stupid jokes and ego and stubbornness to match Dream’s own. They’re too far into this friendship thing now - past the point of no return.

His own damn fault for not being content with what he has. Which is why he can’t ruin this, can’t allow himself moments of weakness anymore. Something broke his resolve in Orlando and he can’t allow it to happen again.

“You are so dumb. So so dumb. I hate how dumb and stupid and how much of a fucking moron you are. I could kill you Dream.”

He chuckles wetly. “Aren’t you supposed to be the supportive best friend right now? Telling me I don’t have to do anything I don’t want to?”

“Fuck that Dream! I’m not your conscience or guide to salvation or the stupid voice in your head. I’m your best friend here to tell you that you are the stupidest densest motherfucker on this planet! You’re so repressed that I want to punch you.”

“What the hell are you talking about?”

“If you think that George doesn’t love y—”

“We’re not arguing about this, Nick.” He spits out, jaw set. Tension building in the line of his shoulders.

“This is stupid though! If you’d just look right in front of your own two eyes you’d know he loves you too. Anyone can see, strangers on the fucking Internet argue about it on the daily!”

“I’ve stood in front of him with my own two eyes. I make him, uncomfortable at best. I think he knows something’s off, he keeps giving me these weird looks like I’m going to jump him. He’s probably figured it out and is freaked the hell out.”

“He wouldn’t think that.”

“Have you met him? He’s worse than me talking about shit. Figuring out what he’s thinking is like taking a shot in the fucking dark.”

“He loves you Dream.”

“Maybe. Maybe... But the way I feel for him, it’s... different. It’s not the same.”

“Dream.”

“It’s alright. Just... can we be done with this? I don’t want to fight. I’m standing in the middle of a fucking rainstorm talking about this with you. Let’s leave it.”

“Sure... okay.”

“We’ll talk later. Bye Nick.” He hangs up before he can hear Sapnap’s goodbye. Hands shaking.

This whole time Dream has been lying. To himself and to George by pretending he doesn’t know why he’s here. In all honesty, he regrets ever coming to England. Sticking out his mistake instead of running back with his tail between his legs.

It’s a different type of pain here from how he felt in Orlando. Here the balmy warmth can’t make his head swim with delusions and his heart feel smothered. He faces the bright reality of it head-on, there’s no escape from George and his feelings. Self-flagellation for his own dumb luck.

If he can enjoy this pain then he supposes that makes him some kind of masochist, deriving pleasure from George’s company whilst his heart aches wretchedly.

Tending to the flames instead of dampening them. He knows Sapnap would agree with that. Somewhere down the line, the fire will take hold of his guiding hand and consume him.

George loves him. This is an undisputed fact. He may not say it often but Dream knows George loves him. Somewhere along the way, Dream’s heart decided it was going to fuck his life over in completely new ways. So he’s stuck saying “I love you” but meaning something different, every

time a private revelation. A small tragedy.

He can't deal with Sapnap now. This isn't where he wanted their conversation to go. Trust that idiot to gain emotional intelligence while Dream is away. He may not be Dream's conscience but Sapnap has a sixth sense when it comes to *Dream Shit*. He always has. Perks of being friends for so fucking long.

Dream's shoes squelch soggly as he walks and it feels deserved.

He'll apologise to Sapnap later. Dream grits his teeth. Right now he has groceries to buy.

We leave Dream in the rain. He has a lot to think about. Back in the flat, George discovers his predictions about the rain were wrong, it's still ceaselessly falling. He wonders if Dream's okay. It's been a while now since he left to go to the shop.

In the meantime, George has showered and changed and almost finished editing another *Minecraft But* and Dream has not yet made a return.

He shoots his friend a text asking after him and goes back to editing a thumbnail.

Twenty minutes later, Dream shows up. Raincoat dripping, his face pale and hands full of bags.

"How much did you buy?" George's face is a picture of confusion when he sees the sight of the man in his living room.

"I got a little carried away." Dream shoots over a tight grin as he puts the bags down, setting George's wet coat on the radiator to dry off.

George feels like he's missing something. There's an odd set to Dream's shoulders, a faraway sheen to his eyes. He marches into the kitchen, pulling open cupboards and drawers to investigate where he can put the shopping.

Unsure of what to say, George puts all the fridge items away, offering directions to the right places when Dream asks, but he doesn't much, seemingly determined to figure it out on his own. It would be sweet if George weren't so worried Dream was about to pop a blood vessel.

They both jump when Dream knocks a carton of eggs to the floor. Cringing at the wet splat as the runny innards spill out of the cracked shells.

"Um, are you okay?" George asks.

"I'm fine." Dream says, but he doesn't look it. "Just pissed off because I'm soaking from the rain and now, fuck! Look at this mess... I've broken like half the eggs."

"Move over." George nudges with his shin where Dream's squatted to the ground. He grabs kitchen roll and tea towels and pulls the bin over from where it sits in the corner. Together they work to clean up the messy carnage of cracked eggs on George's tiled kitchen floor.

“See, still six left. That’s plenty.”

“We’d have them all if I wasn’t so...” Dream’s eyes are wet at the corners.

“It’s alright.” George laughs nervously, hoping to ease the tension. “Go have a shower and get changed. I’ll put the rest away.”

“Are you sure?”

“It’s my kitchen Dream, I’m pretty sure I know where things go better than you.”

“Okay.” Dream agrees weakly. He watches Dream disappear into his bedroom, face drawn.

Something’s wrong, distinctly. George knows Dream’s moods. How he gets when he’s angry, agitated and overstimulated. How it’s better for them both if he steps away and comes back when he’s more settled. Still, he wonders what could have happened while Dream was out that put him in such a strange mood.

There’s only one person he can think to ask for help with this. His phone is in his hand as quickly as he can reach for it.

GEORGE

Do you know what’s up with Dream?

SAPNAP

depends, what has he said to u?

GEORGE

So you do know what’s wrong

SAPNAP

i didn’t say that

GEORGE

You basically did, what’s going on ?

SAPNAP

nothing rlly. we just spoke on the phone.

SAPNAP

normal convo

GEORGE

That’s it? That doesn’t explain why he looks like someone jsut kicked his cat

SAPNAP

idk

GEORGE

SAPNAP!!!! TELL MEE

SAPNAP

i dunno. we kinda had an argument.

GEORGE

?? What about?

SAPNAP

it's nothing serious, we're not mad at each other or anything

SAPNAP

i don't think,

GEORGE

WHAT ABOUT?

SAPNAP

nothing, don't sweat it

GEORGE

I am very sweaty right now

SAPNAP

tell me about it bby ;)

GEORGE

Later, this is a serious conversation!!

SAPNAP

i don't even know what we're talking about i got too distracted by how hot u are rn

GEORGE

You can't even see me

SAPNAP

surprise, i am in ur walls

GEORGE

Yeah with all the other rats where you belong

SAPNAP

wTRF

GEORGE

Will you tell me now please?

SAPNAP

idk.. it's personal

GEORGE

I am one of his best friends

SAPNAP

so ask him urself

GEORGE

That's hard tho

SAPNAP

if he wants to tell you he will

SAPNAP

now fuck off i'm playing valo with punz

GEORGE

Is playing valo a euphemism for something?

SAPNAP

yeah for doing your mother bitch

GEORGE

Die ibn a fire

SAPNAP

LOL

"Is it too early do you think? To start?" George jumps a little, brought out of his daze by Dream reappearing in the room. Dressed in dry sweatpants and a loose t-shirt, his hair is wet, darkened strands hanging in loose ringlets. As though he's only quickly run a towel over it before coming back to George.

He looks better for his shower, less like he's about to jump out of his own skin or break down crying. Still, his stance is nervous. Distracted as he avoids George's eye.

"Too early for what?" George asks.

"To have something to eat." He joins George in the kitchen.

"Well, we've hardly had anything today, so I'm starving." George shrugs in easy agreement.

Dream rolls up his sleeves and offers a steady smile.

"Do you want me to help with anything?" George loiters as Dream starts pulling out some of the things he put away earlier.

"Nah, sit down. I'm trying to show off my skills here." His smile glints, eyes dancing. A reassuring sign that he's alright.

"Sit and look pretty. I can do that." George agrees.

Dream's smile twitches. "Exactly."

Dream cooks with actual care and precision. George is a little mesmerised by it. He had convinced himself he was going to spend the evening laughing at Dream almost setting his kitchen on fire. This is a much better outcome. Quietly, he adds this to his bank of Dream Knowledge and Facts: *Actually, sort of good at cooking.*

"Is that my hoodie?"

George looks down at his own frame, Dream's original black smile hoodie he picked up to keep himself warm.

When he looks back, Dream appears lost in thought.

George fiddles with a sleeve. “You’re the one who left your clothes in a convenient pile on my floor. I couldn’t be bothered to find mine.”

“George this is your apartment. I’m sure you could easily find something.”

“Probably. Yours is comfortable though.”

“Good. I’m... You can wear it whenever you want, anything of mine.”

“Thanks.” George smiles crookedly. Dream’s head ducks and he pointedly goes back to his cooking.

Opening Twitter to fill time, he sends Dream some fanart he comes across. Based on recent events of Dream coming to London. Fan renditions of them hugging in an airport, taking selfies together with their cheeks pressed close. Art of the first picture Dream posted, George opposite him on the train, in which they’ve taken the artistic liberty to draw Dream’s features smiling at George in the reflection.

He sees some tweets from fans, smiling at his phone, then at Dream.

“They miss you.”

“Who?” Dream frowns.

“These idiots for some reason.” George waves his phone at Dream, showing an all-caps tweet stating *‘I MISS DREAM’*.

“I swear I miss Dream must be the most tweeted term on Twitter at this point.” Dream smiles wryly. “We were on Karl’s stream last night. How can they be missing us already?”

“They just do, Dream.” George shrugs. “It’s like if I couldn’t speak to you anymore or you couldn’t speak to me for some reason. I might not have anything to say but I’d still miss having the option if I wanted to. They know you’re not there, paying attention to them.”

“That makes sense, I guess.”

When Dream turns back to cooking, George pulls out his phone to text Sapnap an update.

GEORGE

Did you know Dream could cook?

SAPNAP

so you talked to him?

GEORGE

No but he seems better now anyway

SAPNAP

ur both useless

GEORGE

How?

SAPNAP

just are

SAPNAP

what's he making?

GEORGE

Steak

SAPNAP

oh he would be whipped ass bitch

GEORGE

I'm telling him you said that

SAPNAP

PLEASE DO!!!!

"Sapnap just called you a whipped ass bitch." George reads.

Oddly, Dream doesn't seem to find it as funny as George is expecting. His jaw tightens and he stares intensely down at the chopping board. There's something here George is missing.

Eyes stormy, he dissects George in front of him. "What has he said to you?"

"Nothing." George grows warm under this much scrutiny, Dream's green eyes watch him. "I was just telling him that you were making us a steak."

"That's... all?" He appears visibly relieved.

"Yeah."

"Tell him to mind his own business."

He frowns. "You know he's only joking." It's not that often that Dream takes these types of jokes seriously instead of their intended purpose. Especially if they're made by George and Sapnap, who he knows too well.

"It's irritating when all his jokes are the exact same."

The mood in the kitchen grows uneasy again.

Something is growing wild outside, a rumble in the howl of wind that suggests thunder. George's predictions that the weather would settle seem very wrong indeed.

"Is... is something wrong? You've been really weird since you got back from the shop."

"Nothing's wrong. Why would there be? I'm fine, just not feeling it I guess. I'm tired... and y'know."

George doesn't know.

"Are you sure? You can tell me anything."

“Of course. If there was something I could say, I’d say it. But there isn’t. There’s nothing. Nothing to worry about.”

If anything is going to assure George less, it’s Dream’s over-assurance that all is well. He feels as though he’s caught in an electrical storm, nerves on edge and smouldering. He could argue and push back how he usually does until Dream gives in. But his hair’s standing on end, Dream’s got this glazed, wild look in his eye and he has a bad feeling that if he does push things really will go up in flames.

In the end, the food is great. Better than anything George has had recently. It’s not enough to shake the heavy-something that weighs over the evening. Dream remains distracted and twitchy, conversations falling flat when usually they can bridge the gap between topics. Stalling and silent. George crawls with nervous energy the entire time.

Dream washes the dishes, he insists. George lets him, slipping into his bedroom for relief from the tension. His cat lays in the centre of the unmade bed, perking up at the sight of him. George heads to her and she rolls onto her back, pawing at the air in his direction. Somehow she knows he needs a distraction. She chases his hand as he crawls it along the sheets, a dangerous game to play if he doesn’t want to get accidentally scratched.

She follows his fingers with her swatting paws, turning back onto her front so she can give chase over his wiggling digits. Until she traps his hand under her paw. Unfortunately for her, humans are much stronger than cats and so George pulls his hand out from under her with ease. He ends up with a little nick on the back of his hand, but it’s worth it.

He almost jumps when he sees something from the corner of his eye. Dream, looking stricken, leans in the doorframe watching George.

“Hi.” George’s voice catches under the intensity, he follows the movement of Dream’s throat as he swallows.

“I’m sorry. For being a dick. I don’t really have an excuse and I’m not trying to make myself one.” He shifts from foot to foot.

“We all have our moments.” George shrugs.

In his idleness, George’s cat swats at his hand, leaving a lovely mark that while barely breaking skin, stings immediately. “Ouch.” George frowns, moving his hand out of her way. She settles on the bed, watching him curiously. Her reign of terror ending for now.

“Are you okay?”

“Just a scratch.” George’s mouth curves into a smile.

A subtle shift in Dream’s shoulders sees the tension drain from them. He joins George, sitting on the bed. Taking George by surprise when he reaches out and tugs at George’s hand until he can see it up close. George’s hands are more slender than Dream’s. Not much smaller, but different all the same. The grip Dream has is gentle. Careful to an almost clinical degree.

“See? No harm done.” George says, awkward under the amount of scrutiny Dream has over such a little scratch. His brows are knitted as he thinks.

George is unsure, but this doesn’t feel like the normal amount of time you inspect someone’s hand, he doesn’t pull away. Dream’s thumb brushes against his knuckles, a purposeful swipe and he twists their fingers together. George looks up, heart-racing and Dream lets go, all too quickly.

“The steak was really good by the way,” George says to fill the growing silence.

Dream nods. “I tried.” He clears his throat. “Did you get the video done?”

“Pretty much. I wanted you to watch over it for me before I post it.”

“Of course.”

Dream stands and the moment collapses. George’s cat sneezes and together they go over to the desk so George can play him the video file.

Late into the night, Dream is pointlessly awake. George sleeps beside him, back to Dream and breathing evenly. Mere centimetres away.

He feels homesick. For Patches, his own space and his mom. He wouldn’t trade this time with George for the world now he has it. But he’s sick with dread after his conversation with Sapnap.

In the airport, before he’d ever caught sight of George across a crowded room, he’d told himself that he would shove his feelings as far down as possible and enjoy his time here. Things would go back to normal upon his return to Orlando.

Now Sapnap has gone and ruined that by bringing it all centre to his mind. He shouldn’t blame Nick for the racing thoughts that plague him, they’re his own creation after all.

“George?” He whispers to the night air.

There’s no reply, he hears the deep exhale of George’s breathing. He’s fast asleep.

“I—” He stalls. Sapnap is right, he hasn’t even said it out loud yet. Can’t get his words out, they mean more than words can express.

“I wish I could tell you everything. He says instead, voice soft and sincere.

In a twist that no one is expecting, the sun finally shines. Not even the MET Office apparently, who foretold of rainy showers for the rest of the week. It’s a miracle, what with the state of the weather yesterday.

George wakes to sunlight. Not the grey pattern of stormy weather. A new day begins.

Instead of lazing around (that's such a cold weather thing) George drags himself up and out of bed. To the main room, where the living room slash kitchen glows with fresh-born sunlight. That may be over the top, what with the inconsistency of the British sun at the best of times.

George opens a window, letting the clear morning air in.

The counters are empty and clean apart from some fruit Dream bought yesterday, George doesn't own a fruit bowl so they occupy their own space in the centre of the worktop. Oranges sit in one of those red net string bags, George pulls it apart to attain one.

Taking one that fits perfectly in the palm of his hand, he sets about peeling it. The smell of orange fresh in the air, soaking into his fingers. Where it will linger even after his hands have been washed.

He eats a slice, savouring the taste and the morning.

Dream comes to him not long after, as he pops the second satisfying slice into his mouth. Crossing the room until he's at George's side, facing out the open window. Perhaps relishing in the sun the same way George is.

George offers him a slice and he takes it.

They share piece after piece until all that's left is the peel. Dream disposes of it, gathering it in his hands and dropping it all carefully into the bin.

They don't say much to each other, it feels difficult to break the silence when it has built up for so long. Unexpectedly, Dream's head lolls against George's shoulder and this, this is new. George blinks through surprise and lands on acceptance. It's a new day after all, who knows what it will bring.

Chapter End Notes

chapter song — just like heaven by katie melua

the quiet moments between,
just like a dream.

bonus song: this feeling by alabama shakes

"She peels an orange, separates it in perfect halves, and gives one of them to me. If I could wear it like a friendship bracelet, I would. Instead I swallow it section by section and tell myself it means even more this way. To chew and to swallow in silence with her. To taste the same thing in the same moment."

— We Are Okay by Nina LaCour

clueless

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Somewhere, a clock hand inches forward as time continues to tick. Somewhere, (precisely the clock hung on George's living room wall) another second passes by.

[A week in motion, studied through snapshot glances at a clock. Not always this same clock, white and plain with black-painted metal arms. Often other methods are used to measure time passing.]

Such as that sun-filled day, as George glances at the time display on his microwave. The air smells like oranges, the moment remembered as saccharine sweet. This is the earliest George has woken in a while, the yellow-green digital display shows a fresh eight am. This day tastes like oranges in his mouth as he recalls the hesitant way Dream stood beside him. Unsure of himself, unwilling to let go of whatever had seized his mood yesterday and coloured him a blue-tinged melancholy.

Today the sun promises change. Orange sticky on fingers and tart on lips.

George is practised in the art of cheering up Dream. Starting subtle, this is a mission of the highest importance after all. A hand guides Dream to his desk, settled on his tense shoulders.

"What are we doing?" Dream asks, head tilting all the way back, looking up at George with wide, quizzical eyes. Dream's mop of hair falls back from his forehead with him, George's fingers twitch of their own accord.

"Playing Minecraft."

"George." Dream emotes, not quite a whine. "I don't feel like streaming."

"We're not. This is just for us."

From this angle, he can watch the precise movement of Dream's throat as he swallows. Adam's apple bobbing. "Oh." His mouth barely opens, the reply more an outwards puff of air than anything.

Leaving Dream in front of the computer, he drags a chair from the kitchen and his laptop from where it's been charging on his nightstand.

"You're playing on that?" Is Dream's next question. Ignoring the judgement, George perseveres.

"Yes."

"It has a trackpad."

"So? Remember when you played with a trackpad." George teases, hoping to ignite Dream's nostalgia. Remembering his younger self draws him into a better mood.

"I played my first Minecraft Monday with one." Dream smiles in memory of a time before.

The early days when they were all kids with big dreams, unsure of how they would fulfil them yet. He wonders sometimes if they'd have met in person, without YouTube. If they'd be as close as they are now. So different it was just a short few years ago, before Dream said, *come with me, we'll do it together*.

Settling into the chair, George balances the laptop on his folded legs.

“Do you remember when I was still living at home and we’d have to be quiet in case I woke up my mom and dad and— was it MCPvP we were really into at the time?”

“Probably.”

“Well, I remember this one night we were in this never-ending fucking argument about who was better and we kept going and going. Neither of us would admit defeat. It was late. I was so angry - it’s funny now thinking about it. Then you fucking cheated—”

“I did not cheat!” George gapes.

“Yeah, of course not, George. You were always trying shit.” Dream’s eyes roll, unconvinced even now. “But you beat me and I was pissed because you were gloating, as you usually do, and I started yelling.”

“Oh yeah?”

“Yeah. Then my dad burst into my room - I was standing in front of my laptop. Because I had stood up at this point. It was like four am. And he stared at me, didn’t shout or anything. Just that disappointed look - like what the hell are you doing kid?”

“I don’t think we heard from you for a week after that.”

“I was grounded for a month. Could only use my computer for school work. And then they got so sick of me complaining that they gave in, so I had it back in the week.”

“We all thought you’d disappeared from the face of the earth, never to be seen again. I remember thinking, well there’s Dream gone, wish I’d spoken to him more.”

“Really? You thought that?”

“Yeah. I know we weren’t like best friends at that point, but I didn’t stay up all night playing Minecraft and talking to anybody and everybody.”

“Well...”

“Shut up. Okay, maybe I did stay up all night talking to everybody. But I always liked talking to you more, even then.”

“I didn’t even think you liked me that much at first.”

“What?”

“You were like, hard to get a read on. You still are! So fucking sarcastic that it drove me up the wall half the time. You were mean.”

Picture this, sixteen-year-old George is writing code in his room, he thinks he wants to go to University to study Computer Sciences, he’s already making money freelancing for people on the Internet. He doesn’t know what to think about this thirteen-year-old developer on a little server called MunchyMC. He plays video games often and sometimes his friends upload funny montage clips of each other playing and screaming and laughing onto YouTube (they don’t do very well, but it’s fun anyway). And here’s this kid DreamOnPVP and he’s somehow friends with everybody that George is friends with and with no fewer than three exchanges he has George hooked. This is

someone George can find comfort in. Which is difficult. He's easily provoked at sixteen, a late bloomer, his voice still hasn't dropped. Scrawny and nerdy, too self-aware and yet unwilling to change any of it. Scared to change.

He finds comfort in people who don't tease him for things that are out of his control. Who instead mock only his horseshit PvP skills. Who crack up at the same dumb edgy jokes he does. He feels like he could tell Dream anything. He doesn't. They're not there yet, sixteen year old George hasn't discovered that it's okay to let people in sometimes. He's all false bravado and dumb laughter to cover genuine insecurity. Dream's number doesn't have a place in his phone, Sapnap isn't quite the brother he didn't know he wanted (needed) yet.

He doesn't know that he's just met his person, that Dream will change his entire world. That he still is changing it.

"I thought you were cool," George admits to Dream. "I didn't even realise you were younger than me at first, but I just knew you were this guy who ran a server all my friends played on and I wanted to be like you. I was a little jealous."

"Of me?"

"You seemed like you knew what you wanted. You always have."

"Now you're making me feel bad, all I said is that you were snarky and kinda annoying."

"Well, I wasn't only that.."

"No, you... There's a reason we've kept in contact more than all the other people we talked to at the time. Why I... why it was you and Sapnap I wanted to do this with."

"Because you love us, Dream?" George leans forward, he wants to see Dream blush. And Dream does, flushing high on his cheeks. "Go on, you can admit it."

Dream looks away, grimacing. "You're an asshole. C'mon, are we playing this dumb game or what?"

"What? You're not gonna say it?" George pushes and Dream gives him a look, pleading. Jaw shifting - actually annoyed at this teasing. "Alright, fine. Let's go on Hypixel or something."

George settles into his chair, laptop balanced on folded legs.

He loses the first game of bedwars, but only because his keybinds are all messed up on his laptop. Dream offers no sympathy, expressing that he should've been smart enough to change them before the game started. Like Dream did to George's 'wack-ass' settings.

Their games continue, if Dream knows this is George's way of trying to make him feel better, he doesn't say anything. But his shoulders aren't tense anymore and he doesn't seem quite so ready to run away. George counts it as a win.

Another snapshot memory springs fondly to mind.

The time on his second monitor reads 12:07. Four hours into playing bedwars and George is hungry. The blissful sunshine persists in the back of his mind.

There's food in the fridge but he wants to go outside. He tells Dream as much.

They get changed in George's bedroom, out of the casual sleeping clothes they're wearing and into jeans, t-shirts and jackets. Dream shoving into his dirty old Nike sneakers that George can't believe he still has.

Escaping the flat, they pass jokes and jabs over pointless things. It's comfortable here. They know this routine well. A carved-out place where they can argue and be stubborn and still stay exactly where they've always been. It makes life easier, knowing on some unspeakable level that Dream will always be his best friend, that they will always have this mutual agreement to share this.

Dream thrives in sunlight, his freckles stand out, cheeks bright and rosy. George revels in it.

The pavements dry underfoot, apart from where the uneven cracks in the paving stones have formed puddles. Dream steps carefully over them, not wanting to get his shoes wet.

In George's memory, there's no particular conversation that sticks out about this memory. Just the warm colour it is bathed in. The brush of Dream's arm against him as they walk. The light makes his eyelashes seem more blond than brown.

Dream is casually good-looking, the sort that may not stand out in a crowd but when you know him, when you take the time to notice, it kind of takes your breath away. It's the little half-moon scar on his nose. The pull of his lips and the crinkles by his eyes as he smiles. His hair, too long, falling over his forehead, into his eyes. Asking to be pushed away from his face.

It's even sort of thrilling how hard it is to make eye contact with Dream sometimes. When he gets too lost in what he's saying, or is distracted. Eyes staring through you instead of at you - caught up in remembering or explaining. George has concluded that a part of Dream hasn't quite connected that George can see him sometimes. For all the time he's spent at home in Orlando talking through a screen. Especially within this last year, as Dream has spent more time inside, hiding from the outside world.

In the middle of an anecdote, his expressions and gestures do half the storytelling on their own.

When Dream does make eye contact, it's hard to look away. George gets caught up in it. Wants to keep his attention with a quip or joke so he can hold onto those green eyes a little longer.

There's a pasta restaurant near Covent Garden that George takes people to when he's trying to impress them. One of those, genuine (or trying to seem genuine) Italian places. They sit across from each other at a table by the window, looking down onto the street. Dream seems intent on people watching as they wait for their food, chin resting on his palm. His other hand twirling the paper cover from his straw between his fingers.

"I keep thinking someone's going to like, recognise you and stop us in the street and then realise I'm *Dream* and I'll accidentally face reveal before we're ready." He says after what seems like much deliberation.

George shrugs. "We'd just tell them not to take any pictures."

Dream's head turns to face him, both hands coming together to roll the paper between his fingers.

“I didn’t really think about the fact that I’d be in public so much.”

“We can go back if you want.”

“No, it’s... it’s alright. If it happens, it happens y’know. At least we’re together.”

“London’s big,” George tells him, lips pursed. “I hardly get recognised unless I’m going somewhere for an event. People don’t care. It’s like a— what are they called? Liminal spaces.”

“How is The City of London a liminal space?”

Deliberating, George takes a sip of his water. “The concept of it. It’s obviously not one, but it’s so big and there are so many people... I don’t know, maybe that’s not the right way to describe it.” He considers. “Even though it’s full of people, it’s empty because they’re strangers.”

“Yeah, that makes sense.”

“What would you do, if someone came up to you?” George asks him.

“Probably freak out.” Dream shakes his head. “It’s already strange enough not being at home, I was so used to being there constantly. I barely went out before I decided to come here, apart from seeing my mom and stuff.”

“It’s still weird to me, honestly. When people come up. I never know what to say.” George admits.

“Smile and wave, I guess.”

George laughs. “Something like that.”

They eat enough pasta to send themselves into a food coma, leaning against one another as they head out.

“I know we were going to do something else today but I really want to just go back to the flat and lay down for the rest of the day.”

“George, that’s exactly what I was thinking. I didn’t wanna say it first though.”

“Come on, let’s hope the Tube’s not too busy.”

“What time is it?” George asks.

“Seven,” Wilbur replies, distracted. It’s turning from afternoon to evening. Sky darkening considerably. In an instant, the room seems so much dimmer than it was moments ago when sunlight seemed to be shining still.

“Are you guys done yet?” George groans, sitting back in the kitchen chair he was relegated to. Dream has been pulled into a long overdue call with Wilbur about some Dream SMP plot that George honestly couldn’t care less about.

Rolling his eyes at George’s question, Dream jabs him in the thigh. George slaps the retreating hand with a scowl.

“Is that George? George! Are you there?” It’s Tommy, who has joined at some point without George’s notice.

He ignores Tommy calling him.

“Gogs, just because you’re irrelevant to the plot, doesn’t mean we don’t have shit to do,” Wilbur informs him, his usual air of affectedness.

Disregarding Wilbur, George smirks at the amused ‘ouch’ that Dream comes out with because of the slap. Quietly tending to his injured hand by rubbing it with the other.

“You’re all so boring.” He huffs.

“We won’t take much longer, then we can do something.” Dream smiles sympathetically.

George understands that trying to organise a time to talk about lore is like herding particularly feral cats, but Dream and Wilbur have been talking for a good two hours now. For George, who is only half-listening, time dredges on slowly, like wading through murky water.

“Are we taking up your valuable time, Gogmeister?” Wilbur adds, teasing.

With a sigh, George stands. Dream watches him, office chair squeaking as it turns. George pivots across the room to flop down onto his bed, staring up at the ceiling.

The chair squeaks again, Dream turning back to the monitor, muttering something to Wilbur with one of his hiccuping giggles.

In a daze, George blinks up at his ceiling, taking in the eerie white-blue light of his monitors. Eyes closing, he dozes. Dream’s exchange with Wilbur passes easily over him.

When a hand wraps around his ankle, he startles to discover some time has gone by, an indecipherable amount. Dream stands looming at the end of the bed, eyes rounded and watching George, a little sorry for waking him. He gives the joint a careful squeeze.

“Hi.” Voice cracking from overuse, Dream holds his bare ankle. Touch warm and deliberate. If he wanted to, he could nudge George’s legs apart and settle between them. And then...

And then what? George’s mouth parts, he can’t place the feeling that has sunk sweetly into his stomach.

The hold squeezes, George is frozen. But then Dream is letting go and he’s free again.

“Um.” George feels as though his brain has turned to mush in his skull.

“We’re finished. Well, not really, but I told them I had to go.”

“Why?”

“Cause I’d rather spend time with you.”

“Oh.” George grins slowly. “What d’you want to do?”

Dream sits on the bed, near George’s hip, looking down at him.

“Dunno, it’s only early. We could try to catch up on sleep, I kinda want to do some more tourist shit tomorrow.”

“Okay.” George agrees easily.

“What do you want to do?”

“Lay here and do nothing.”

“We could do that.” Dream nudges. “Move over, we can lay together.”

“No, I’m comfortable.”

“Then I’ll just sit here, watching you sleep... Like Edward in Twilight.”

Not thinking, George mumbles. “Hot.”

When he realises, his eyes widen and he laughs sharply in shock at himself.

“Shut up.” Dream smiles, embarrassed for the both of them.

“You know what I mean.”

“Do I?”

Instead of replying, George pointedly moves over, allowing Dream to shuffle onto the bed next to him where they lay side by side.

“So, you think Edward from Twilight is hot?”

George spares a glance at Dream, who is intently focused on the ceiling above them. He thinks Dream might be holding his breath a little.

He knows what’s being asked here really. what Dream isn’t saying outright.

They don’t talk about this stuff. George doesn’t, at least. Until a couple of months ago, when Dream quietly told George and Sapnap that his sexuality wasn’t as straightforward as he’d once believed. That he had been thinking about it for a while and though he didn’t want to label anything, it wasn’t only women he could see himself dating.

What has remained unspoken, is that George thinks if it was the right person, he could fall for anyone too. He hates having to explain something he isn’t sure he even has the vocabulary to understand. So he doesn’t, Schrodinger’s cat. Blaming it on growing up and using the word gay to mean something bad, overhearing adults call any man who showed any hint of emotion gay or worse. And so in turn he was the one telling the shitty jokes. Overcompensating for what he dared not think about.

But they’re in this quiet moment, surrounded by soft sheets and it was such a silly, cautious question that George finds the courage to answer.

“Not as hot as Bella’s dad was.” And who said coming out to your best friend had to be such a monumental thing? That you had to say it in as many words. George speaks around the hard truths

because they're easier to swallow, easier to digest.

"You're kidding."

"He had a moustache, right?" George strokes a finger to an imaginary moustache on his upper lip and it makes Dream finally look at him.

"I think so. *Bella's dad?*" Dream asks again, surprised still.

"Yeah, why are you so shocked?"

"I... I'm just... you surprise me sometimes." Eyes round, honest.

"Okay."

Dream scoffs. "Well, now I think we've got to watch *Twilight*."

They do. George even convinces Dream that Charlie Swan is hotter than Edward Cullen after all.

It's ten minutes past too late to save their pizza.

"It's ruined!"

"This is your fault."

"I told you to set a timer!"

"I did... I thought I did..." There's a pause, George checks his phone. "Oh shit, I didn't press start."

"It's burnt George." Dream whines.

"This is your fault if you think about it."

"My fault? How is this my fault?"

"You distracted me with your... weirdness."

They stare at a burnt crispy disk that once resembled a pizza. It had been homemade and everything.

“Guess we’ll have to order food instead.” George sighs, shrugging helplessly. Unable to fight the grin that’s sliding onto his face, pulling at the corners of his mouth.

“This was your evil plan all along, wasn’t it?” Burn the pizza so you could get your own wicked way.”

“I mean, it wasn’t intentional, but it really did work out for me in the end.” He laughs unbridled now, at the pizza and Dream’s expression.

“I should kick your ass you little shit.” Dream exclaims at the gall of him.

Drawing his hands up in defence, George’s eyes glint. “I would love to see it.”

“Oh really?” Dream’s expression sets defiantly.

In a rush, Dream bats his hand against George and they engage in an arm flailing brawl, both not swatting hard enough to hurt. George gets Dream in the side and Dream jerks away, laughing in reaction to the ticklish feeling. So George does it again, realising quickly he has the upper hand. He chases Dream across the kitchen, intent on his victory until Dream spins on his heels and takes George by the sides, lifting him upwards, fingers digging in. George squawks to make sense of this attack and how to retaliate as he’s carried across the room to the sofa. His stomach lurching in surprise when he’s dropped onto it, blinking up at Dream.

He laughs loudly. “Dream!”

Whatever Dream’s plan was, he seems to have given up on it, stepping away and looking with a startled expression down at George’s prone form.

“Uh—” Dream stutters pointlessly. Shuffling from foot to foot.

“What were you even trying to do?” Gasping from his breathlessness.

“I don’t know.” A hand comes up to rub at the back of his neck. “I was going to like... do some pro wrestling move and KO you. But then I realised how much of a bad idea that would be.”

George snorts. Dream looks guilty for something he hasn’t even done.

Sitting up, the adrenaline wears off as quickly as it came. George sighs. Standing in front of him, Dream doesn’t move out of the way to let George up. Lost in thought. George ignores it, kicking his foot against Dream’s so he snaps out of his daze.

“Come on, let’s order food. I’m actually starving.”

Dream moves to let him up and he pulls his phone from his back pocket.

“The smell of burnt pizza isn’t putting you off?” Dream asks, nose scrunching as he comes back to himself.

“Nothing could ever put me off food, Dream.”

They share a smile.

In the end, pizza is ordered and once they’re halfway through Dream goes on to complain about how the one they had made would have been so much better if George hadn’t ruined it.

He doesn't know what fucking time it is only that it's too early for this shit. George groans. The world is entirely dark and George is warm and comfortable and very tired.

And— what the fuck is that irritating noise that woke him? Like a cat meowing or— wait, that is a cat meowing. His cat.

Turns out the world is only entirely dark when you have your eyes closed. Forcing them open, George glances about for his cat. Something stops him and George has the realisation that he's so warm and comfortable because Dream's arm is around him. Has wormed its way under George's, hand resting against his stomach, their bodies pulled together. He's being spooned by Dream right now. George stills. This is a very odd thing to wake up to. If he knew the guy was such a cuddler he would have insisted Dream sleep on the sofa.

Okay, he wouldn't have done that. But it would have been nice to know that he may wake up with Dream hugging him.

He feels Dream's breath against the back of his neck, slow and even.

It's... it's nice. George decides, heart racing. He attempts to calm himself down, breathing deeply to dispel the pit of anxiety that has built in his stomach.

He's warm, and can feel Dream's warm touch pressing against his skin even through his t-shirt. His hand moves of its own accord, searching for Dream's relaxed digits. To move them away? Maybe that was the intention but he finds himself holding on instead.

Then the cat fucking meows and George remembers what woke him in the first place.

She stands on the floor by his side of the bed, staring up with her huge round eyes. She meows again, louder this time. Her tail swishing.

"Shh." He tells her. "Go sleep."

But she meows again, perhaps in spite. Closing his eyes, George tries to ignore her. But it's a fruitless endeavour, she's insistent. George does not want to wake Dream up. With this in mind and despite his tiredness he has to move. Slipping out of bed with as little fuss as possible, following after his cat as she bounces toward the living room upon realising he will follow. George rubs at his eyes as he goes.

There's food and water in her bowls, her litter box is unobstructed and recently cleaned. He really does not know what the problem is here. She jumps onto the kitchen counter, delicately planting herself next to the window.

"You want fresh air?"

Padding over to meet her, George leans over the counter top and unlocks the window, pulling the sash up and wide. She looks out, nose twitching and then turns back to him.

“What?” He mutters, brushing a hand through her fur. She purrs, rubbing her face against his fingers and palm. “Do you just want attention?” He asks.

She chirps quietly, as his fingers brush against the fur behind her ear.

“You could have got that while I was still in bed you know?”

She’s like butter against his hand and George finds he can’t be mad at being woken. Instead, he picks her up gently and she curls up against his chest.

“You’re a spoiled baby.” He tells her.

Walking them back through the empty flat, into the bedroom where it’s warm compared to the cold of the kitchen. He places her on the end of the bed and rounds to his side while she observes him. Quietly, and with as little movement as possible, George climbs back into bed. Watching his cat as she walks, no longer meowing, up the bed to settle herself between him and Dream. Curled in a ball close to Dream’s chest. George’s face softens and he shuffles down the bed so he can keep a hand in her fur. At this angle he faces Dream directly, attention shifting to the other living creature occupying his bed tonight. To find Dream blinking awake, tired brow pulled together. Despite George’s best efforts to allow him to sleep on, he awakes.

“Sorry.” Whispers George, wincing.

“It’s okay.” Dream croaks, that wonky smile pulling his cheeks and watery eyes he has from yawning. In the low light, his eyes sparkle like he’s managed to capture stars in them.

In silence, they watch each other. The only noise is the cat’s soft purring and their own steady breathing. George hyper aware of each inhale-exhale of his own chest.

This might be the longest he’s ever looked at anyone, uninterrupted and with no clear end. Looking at each other for the sake of it.

In moonlight, Dream looks so young and so unbelievably... George does not have the words. Can only witness and marvel in the way the light blesses him, at the corner of his brow, the high of his cheek, the sweep and fall of his jaw. Light hitting the bridge of his nose and bringing it to sharp focus, glancing off the bronze of his hair which seems brown in the darkness.

Wanting desperately to say something, George struggles. Words don’t come to him. Instead, he studies Dream’s eyelashes in the moon’s pale light and hopes Dream knows somehow what he’s thinking of.

The cat meows, loud in their shared silence. Her body stretching as a paw swats up in the air. George realises his hand has gone still in her fur. The moment breaks with that as they both make soft noises of laughter. A moment of midnight madness dissipates as Dream gives him one last smile before he turns over, back to sleep.

George lays awake.

He’s making sense of this still, George reasons. Dream is an overwhelmingly big part of his life, it’s difficult to reconcile. In interrupting the routine of George’s life he has rummaged through the boxes that George organises things into. He will have to find a new way to make it all fit. Thankfully, there is time to figure it out.

It's vaguely some time past one in the afternoon. George knows only because he had checked the clock on the wall before they left the flat.

They're on the tube, Northern line to Camden Town station. Just passing Tottenham Court Road, somewhere in the dark tunnels of the underground, speeding down them with the usual grating squeak of the train on its tracks as it bends around corners. The carriage is fairly busy as is usual for this time of day. On a line heading to a part of London that is always packed with people. They stand holding a rail in the centre of one of the carriages, between the doors on either side and two backpack-wearing tourists who seem impressed even by this scruffy train carriage.

A loud, ringing shriek makes George's ears pop as the carriage jerks along its track too quickly. Dream unfamiliar with the sensation, rubs at his ear and glances wide-eyed at George.

Leaning close, he asks. "Did your ears just pop?"

"Yeah, it happens sometimes." George shrugs, forces himself to yawn to get the ringing to go away. Copying George, or yawning because someone else is, Dream yawns too. Looking surprised as his hearing returns.

Jolting as the carriage does, George crashes into Dream and Dream into the door as they come to a halting stop at Goodge Street station. Dream's hands are at his hips, holding them both steady, George's hands caught somewhere in the fabric of Dream's jacket. The doors beep open. Around them people move, getting on and off before the doors close again. Dream looks down at him, red colouring his cheeks.

George realises he's practically plastered against Dream's front.

"Sorry, didn't have a good enough grip."

Dream chuckles and George can feel the vibrations of it against his skin even as he moves away back into his own personal space.

"Not many stops left, then we'll be there."

"Okay." Dream nods, still backed into the wall of the carriage looking as dazed as George feels.

Camden is as bustling and colourful as George remembers it being. It's been a while since he was last here. Stepping out onto the street outside the station, George takes Dream by the arm and pulls him along so he doesn't get lost. A sea of people take up the pavement on either side of the road, lingering outside the odd assortment of shops lining the streets. Selling clothes and music and tourist tat. Heading straight, they cross the bridge that will bring them to Camden Lock. Dream points at a guy sitting on the bridge, hair gelled to the extreme in a bright red mohawk, wearing a

studded leather jacket, grungy and torn, with nothing beneath it but a tattooed chest. He sits on the wall of the bridge, a cardboard sign in his hands, hastily penned *'HELP GET A PUNK DRUNK!!!'*. George grins at Dream's bafflement.

Heading into the Lock, where the market stalls are, they head first past countless food stalls, filling the air with the mouth-watering smell of garlic and smoke. George has no direction in mind, so he pulls Dream along as they explore together. Wandering past painted stalls advertising the niche and kitsch and overly touristy (some stalls have all three of these things at once).

George has left his flat more within these last few days than he usually would in a single month. It's nice actually, he has a newfound appreciation of his city. He has Dream to thank for allowing him to experience it.

They both do not know where to head, so they walk with no purpose through winding stalls, observing all around them.

Down a brick-lined tunnel, into the sinking depths to discover what Camden has to offer. Winding up somewhere cavernous that smells of incense and old leather. Surrounded on all sides by towering shelves of nick-nacks, old furniture and a shelf full of vintage cameras older than the two of them. Rock music churns out from an alcove, where a man sits surrounded by tables stacked high with records and CD's and in one corner, stacks of old cassette tapes. George drags Dream on by the elbow and they find themselves upon a hole in the wall selling second-hand clothes.

"Cool." Dream reaches out and fingers through a rail of shirts George has definitely seen his dad wear.

George scoffs. "If you want to look and smell like a grandad I guess."

Smirking, Dream flicks him in the shoulder. "Sorry, didn't realise you were the authority on fashion around here."

"Well, I am."

"These are cool though." Dream leads him to where his eyes have fallen upon an entire wall of leather jackets, all different types, some like the one the punk was wearing on the street, which had been tight and emblazoned with patches, paint and studs. Some are long and boxy, heavy looking. They're pretty cool.

Dream pulls one off the rail by its hanger, taking off his own sports jacket and dropping it beneath his feet.

"What are you doing?" George asks, though it's clear.

"Trying it on, seeing if I look cool."

"Doubt it."

Dream pulls a face, tugging the leather around his shoulders. It hangs long even on Dream's tall frame, the hemline sitting at his knees. The bulk of the material on his shoulders makes Dream look even broader.

George snorts. "You look like you're in The Matrix."

"I look sick." Dream catches a glimpse of himself in the mirror hanging from a wooden beam to the side of the space. "George, you have to admit I look sick in this."

“Yeah, ill. Like you’re seriously about to throw up. *So sick* .”

“Dick.” Dream shakes his head. “You try one on!”

“No.” His nose crinkles. “Why?”

“Because, I wanna see what you look like too. We can match.” With a blinding grin, Dream beckons him. Acquiescing, George picks one at random, pulling a jacket out and putting it on over top of his hoodie. It’s way too big, slipping easily on over his clothes. Dream’s grin widens, pointy canines visible and all.

“George! He exclaims. Then before he can say more, Dream’s attention snaps away. “Oh look! Glasses!” Surging across the aisle he grabs two pairs off the rack, bringing them back to George.

“Put these on!” He shoves a pair of black framed sunglasses into George’s hands.

“What?”

“So we can look like we’re in The Matrix! I want to show Sapnap!”

“You want to take a picture?”

“Well it’s not like I’m gonna post it anywhere. But for us?”

“Okay, as long as you send it to me too.” Smiling, George puts the glasses on his face. They stand side by side in front of the mirror, seeing them both in the jacket and glasses makes his smile widen more. They look so dumb. His own coat is way too big, like a kid dressing up in his dad’s jacket. Still, they do look very Matrix-y.

With an arm hooking around George’s waist, Dream snaps a picture of them in the mirror, George trying to school his face into as blank of an expression as possible.

Moments after snapping the picture they’re chased away from the jackets by the stern-faced owner. Proclaiming if they’re not going to buy anything, they can get lost. They’ve got their picture though and that’s enough to make Dream look gleeful.

Walking on, they end up following a path out of the underground market and back up towards the light. Up a tunnel lined with even more shops tucked into alcoves, merchandise spilling out onto the cobbles. Overpriced vintage clothes shops, artists studio’s. Cheap-looking tourist memorabilia - the obvious red telephone box keychains, the London Eye and Big Ben cut into cheap, painted metal. T-shirts emblazoned with I <3 LONDON.

One stall however, intrigues Dream. Who spots it first as they weave past some people standing around its entrance. Tucked into another brick alcove, but instead of the wide-open arched doors, a black tarp flaps in some misplaced breeze. Invitingly mysterious. Tucked between a shop selling handmade candles and another selling second-hand books. They hesitate at the entrance. Dream enters first.

Once inside, the outside world fades quickly away. Light and noise become trivial.

The room they enter would be dark if it weren’t being lit by what must be hundreds of lamps. Ornate and colourful mosaic patterns - each one George glances at seems unique in design. Hung carefully from hooks on the walls, covering the surface of tables and benches, taking up space on the floor. A hundred different colours, warm and delicate and bright. Breathtaking, George feels as though he’s walked into a dream somehow. It’s magical. Even with a limited colour palette of

vision, what he sees is mesmerising. You don't need perfect vision to notice that.

It's quiet here, the other patrons seem struck silent. What little noise comes from out in the tunnel and even that is muted.

The lights glow, colour dances over everything it touches. George is reminded of paper lanterns. Burning bright colours filling a night sky. Floating across his vision. The room seems endless - dark enough at the edges that the walls fade away.

"I—" Dream starts but doesn't finish and George is reminded that he isn't alone. This isn't a dream at all. His brown eyes leave the lights and find Dream.

Dream who is already looking, mesmerised and speechless as he is.

They may as well be surrounded by a thousand stars. Somehow, someone has captured them here. Pulled them out of the night's sky for the visitors of this small, strange shop beneath Camden. All for George to stand here with Dream, in complete wonder.

Dream doesn't try to say anything more. But he leans up against George. Their hands brush and Dream's fingers skim his palm - light enough to make him shiver. He links their pinky fingers together, for the sake of having something to hold onto. In this very surreal scene they've stumbled into.

Light surrounding Dream and his dumb curls of golden hair, catching in his eyes.

Across the room, they watch a couple pull together to meet in a kiss. It looks so easy to be in love, to have someone to witness all this wonder with.

He meets Dream's eye, earnest. Devastating, somehow.

George's heart skips. His pinky slips out of Dream's. Their hands fall apart.

A sudden unease has settled over him. It makes George's face feel hot and his palms clammy. As though the air has altogether left the room. An urgent need to escape grows in him.

Suddenly, he can't bear the lights any longer.

Leading them out, George doesn't look back to see if Dream will follow. They leave wordlessly, Dream by George's side but their hands don't brush again even as they squeeze through the crowds. If Dream is worried something is up, he doesn't mention it.

In a street beyond the market he comes back to his senses.

"You okay?" Dream asks.

George, who feels he has spent the past day or so worried that something is wrong with Dream, laughs.

"I'm great. Are you?"

Dream huffs. "Yeah, all good here."

"Good."

“Cool.”

They smile at one another. It's not awkward, George tells himself, definitely not...

They walk aimlessly until Dream stops outside a vinyl shop with a red-painted door and matching red window frame. In front of it a table is set up with boxes full of records. Sheltered only by an overhanging veranda. They seem to be mostly second hand - with ageing covers protected by plastic sleeves. Handwritten labels separating into rock, pop and blues.

“I don't own a record player, do you own a record player?” George asks, noticing Dream's interest.

He turns the door handle, bell jingling as it's pushed open.

“No.” Dream replies, stepping inside anyway. The shop is narrow, lined with rows of record boxes on either side and down the middle. Creating two tight walkways that Dream and George wouldn't fit down walking side by side. At the other end of the shop, a grey-haired woman sits at the counter. She doesn't seem much interested in them, continuing to read from the book in her hands. When she turns the page, George can hear the bangles that decorate her arms clink together.

It smells like sage and old paper. A Fleetwood Mac song plays over the shop's speakers. They connect to a record player that spins the vinyl. A handwritten sign has been stuck to the wall next to it, curled over at the edges of its blu-tacked corners. It invites people to pick from the box of records beside it and change to the vinyl of their choice. Dream flicks through it efficiently. Pausing on those that catch his eye, a strange smile settled at the corners of his mouth.

“My dad used to keep one in the garage.” He checks George is listening, it would be impossible not to.

“A record player. He bought it when he was in college, so he'd had it for years. By the time he had us kids there wasn't really a space for it anywhere in the house. When I was a kid I'd go out into the garage and find him there. I think he was looking for some quiet away from my sisters and brothers and me for a while. But he didn't mind if I ever stayed and listened with him. There was never a moment of peace at home. So dad had to pick his moments. It wasn't really about the music for me, even though he'd try to tell me all about it. I just wanted his attention, undivided for a moment.”

He pulls out a Wings album, *At The Speed of Sound* and passes it to George to hold. George can't say he's familiar with Wings or this album at all. He watches Dream carefully remove Fleetwood Mac's *Rumours* A-side from the plate and return it to its sleeve. Then gestures for the album back from George. He takes the record out and places it on the plate. Nudging the needle until it slowly lowers. With a crackle the vinyl spins and spins until the first notes play.

Despite not recognising the band or album, he for sure knows this song from some advert or film. It's distinctly familiar.

Humming along appreciatively, Dream whispers the words as he slides down the aisle, padding through more records. The song bleeds into the next and then the next.

Music has never affected George before, not a prominent part of childhood. Until he was older and began to share it with his friends, with Sapnap who seemed to always have something playing and Dream who was often embarrassed by his soft spot for One Direction but insisted he had good taste too. He was vaguely aware of Dream's appreciation for older stuff, but he didn't know the reason why until now.

He thinks he can understand it, knows that now if he ever even hears the opening of this song, or hears the band Wings. He'll think of today. Of Dream.

Dream's still humming along even as they head back on the street while Paul McCartney sings away. The bangled lady gives them an amused little wave as she watches them go.

"George." Dream stops so suddenly that George walks into him. "We need to go in there. It's perfect for you!"

Disorientated, George squints after Dream's pointed finger to the object of his amused gasping. They'd been heading away from the markets, back to the tube. Dream has stopped them on the street before they reach the bridge where the punk and his skyscraper mohawk sits. It's a joke shop, through the windows they see walls lined with hula-hoops and juggling pins and water-squirting bow-ties. Brightly coloured both inside and out.

Realising what he's suggesting, George scoffs. "For you more like."

"You are so the bigger clown than me."

"How can I be the bigger clown?" George raises a brow. "Your entire existence is a joke."

"Ouch." Dream clutches at his chest, feinting at letting himself fall. "That hurt George. My heart, it's broken!" He takes a stuttering gasp as though it is in fact his last breath.

"Point proven." George tuts, secretly amused.

George can't quite commit to memory what time it is. Only he wakes feeling it is too early, his eyes don't want to stay open. But knows it must be much later. They'd stayed up far too late the night before with Sappnap, fucking around on Discord and playing CS:GO with him, George mostly playing and suffering through Dream's dog-shit aim when he takes over between rounds.

So it's got to be at least midday by now, and Dream's not in the room. George wakes to find the bed sheets cold beside him.

Pulling himself up, he finds Dream in the living room by his bookshelf. Though it can hardly call itself that. More a shelf with a few books on it, decorated instead with a salt lamp from his sister that he's never bothered plugging in, some glassware his mum gave him. The small collection of books that do live there include his old uni textbooks, a battered paperback set of the Harry Potter books - covers peeling and cracking down the spine.

"You dog-ear your pages." Dream holds up the offending object, a copy of *The Martian* that he's

opened to a page with a folded corner.

“So?” George shrugs.

Dream sniffs. “You’re ruining the pages.”

“They’re my books, I’m sure they’ll survive.” This is sacrilege to Dream apparently, who unfolds the curled over corner and places the book back on the shelf with a weary sigh.

“I told you about this one.” He pulls at George’s Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy. It has suffered a similar fate of overturned pages. Well worn and well-loved.

“You said I might like it.”

“So you bought it?” Dream states, disbelieving.

“Obviously.”

“Did you like it?”

“It was really good.”

“You never said.”

George laughs, helpless. Of course he read it. Dream was seventeen and wouldn’t shut up about some book he’d just finished cover to cover. Mouth moving so fast that George couldn’t get a word in edgeways. So adorably enthusiastic that it made George’s chest ache. Dream only had to say the word and George would follow. Walking into town the next day and buying a book because his Internet friend had told him all about it. That’s just something friends did.

He doesn’t know what time it is. There’s something ridiculous about this.

“What was I supposed to say?”

Dream doesn’t have the answer, his mouth opens and closes, fidgeting under his gaze.

Yes, he read a book because Dream told him he might like it.

What’s so confusing about that? It’s what they do. What they have always done. Like George recommending Dream songs and films. The two of them watching tv shows together.

He just didn’t tell Dream about this one, is all.

“Nothing.” Dream gives up, placing the book back on the shelf and walking away.

Waking to the shrill bell of an Apple ringtone always sets George’s teeth on edge, especially if he’s had a scant few hours sleep beforehand. He forces himself awake all the same, grumpy and

dishevelled. Dream and him have promised themselves to a stream on the grounds that they weren't doing anymore content while Dream was in London so they might as well give their fans something. Something being a Minecraft But We Share A Keyboard challenge. An easy way to reassure their fans that they are in fact alive.

"Hi, chat." George is in his chair, slightly more awake after a quick shower and a cup of tea. Dream sits in the kitchen chair next to him. "No facecam this stream for obvious reasons." He glances at Dream.

"*WHAT!*" Dream exclaims loudly. "No face cam? Cancel your subs guys, cancel it in protest of this- this heinous crime!"

"Shut up. Do not cancel everyone, he's an idiot. Anyway, has the notification gone out? We'll wait 'til it's gone out to start. How are you all?" Chat speed by in a blur of replies.

"I'll wait a few minutes then explain what we're doing today." George repeats.

"It's in the title, George."

He rolls his eyes. "Well I'll explain it better, so everyone understands."

"We can answer some questions quickly if you guys want?" Dream scans the chat as best he can.

"How is London?" He reads out from the blurry, ever-moving wall of text. "It's nice here. I'm really enjoying it. Oh! I know, I'm going to expose George guys, so—"

"*Wait-wait-wait.* What are you going to say?"

"I'm about to tell everyone, just listen."

"Whisper to me first I don't want you exposing me live on Twitch if I don't know what it is."

"No!" Dream chuckles. "Whisper to you? Are we in Kindergarten? I'm not gonna say anything bad." Dream's eyes roll.

"No! I mean— just type it so I can see first."

"George. What do you honestly think I could say that is that terrible?"

"I don't know, you might make something up."

Dream laughs, but George persists until Dream pulls his phone and types it out. George rereads the hastily typed words.

"Oh yeah, whatever. Say it."

"George!" Dream gasps, exasperated. "You are so annoying. You made me go through all that for — it isn't even that interesting. Guys, George is just like purposefully difficult! He's difficult about everything."

"Difficult." George repeats, nose scrunching up.

"See, you just proved my point!" Dream's teeth shine as he grin and maybe it's the glow of the monitor but he looks so profoundly bright that it hurts George to keep looking. "I was only going to say that George is like an old man. Like he genuinely had a nap before we started streaming."

"It was— we went to bed so late last night. I'm still tired." George groans.

"Pfff—" Dream lets the air leave his mouth, eyebrows shooting up. His face flushing suddenly.

"No, not like that!" George glances quickly at chat, his own face heating up. "Oh my god." He laughs in embarrassment, a hand coming up to his face. "Dream... now chats going to spam..." He sighs defeated. The *DNF!! IS!! REAL!!* crowd has already rolled in.

"I'm sorry! Why did you phrase it like that? No, chat - we were on—" Dream's speech breaks into laughter. "Chat, we were on Discord with Sapnap until like 6am GMT."

"Whatever! Moving on. I think the notification has gone out." George claps his hands together, brushing over... that. "Hello everyone! We're doing a challenge today! Beating Minecraft but—"

"We're sharing a keyboard!" Dream interrupts, leaning in over him, in front of the mic. George shoves him away.

"Let me explain."

"What needs explaining?"

"Fine! Nothing needs explaining, we're sharing a keyboard. Dream's doing the mouse and I'm doing the keyboard. That's it, lets go."

"We didn't even have to code anything for this one, because we're literally sat next to eachother guys, how crazy is that?"

"Yes, thrilling." George huffs. He enters a new Minecraft world they've set up, ready to go.

"No facecam today." George reminds the chat as newcomers now spam, *Where's the facecam??!!*

"Unless?" Dream pulls a face.

"Dream face reveals on my stream. Question mark." George matches his expression.

"Nooo." Dream laughs. "Not today at least."

"You're right. Your hair is a mess today. Wouldn't want that to be your first impression... yikes."

"You wound me, George. I don't say anything when your hair looks like shit, like right now."

"My hair is fine." George runs his fingers through it despite himself.

Sudden movement renders in as a hand comes up and ruffles George's hair. "Not anymore!"

"Dream!" George swiftly moves out of reach, nearly falling out of his chair. He pats it down hastily.

"It's not like they can see it." Dream reminds him, observing his reaction.

"Unless I turn the facecam on, to show them what you've done."

"You wouldn't do that."

An evil grin forms. "Well if you stop being annoying I won't have to turn it on. But I could, then everyone would see you... ooooh."

“Asshole.” Dream mutters. “Let’s play the dumb game.”

Grinning in victory, George resets the day cycle on the single-player world and they begin. It’s easier than expected, apart from Dream forgetting that he needs to click or taking too long to turn them around. And George knows for a fact that he does it on purpose, feigning innocence when George tries to call him out on it.

They spend much longer streaming than George initially planned for. Almost four hours of pissing about and talking. Blaming it on each other when they mess up and die and have to restart from nothing.

Both know it's an excuse really, just to play together a little longer.

“How long are you staying?” Karl asks. They’re in a once frequent group call, that Dream and George have not involved themselves in much since Dream arrived. They’ve missed their friends though and so joined when they saw Sapnap and Karl online. Quackity and the others aren't present at the moment, but no doubt they’ll show up at some point.

George’s phone shows him it’s 1 am, he scrolls through his phone whilst they chill. No one is streaming and so the atmosphere is laidback, occasionally a round of laughter at a dumb joke will pick the energy up again. There’s music playing, Sapnap’s, he hums along to it quietly.

George glances at Dream at Karl’s question. He too would like to know the answer.

“I dunno.” He shoots George a smile. “I said I’d stay as long as he would have me. I’m pretty sure he’ll get tired of sharing his bed with me eventually.”

A beat of silence follows. “What?” Karl says evenly. The music still plays, but Sapnap’s fallen silent.

Then George hears Sapnap snort, chair creaking as he leans forward. “Oh, you didn’t know.”

George’s face goes hot.

Dream laughs nervously. “We’re sharing a bed, yeah.”

“You’re sharing a bed? Is this a sleepover? What the hell. Listen I love you guys but I would kill one of you before I ever had to share a bed with you for an extended period of time.” Karl questions them urgently.

“It’s not... a big deal. George didn’t tell me he doesn’t have a spare room, I kinda had to.”

“Dream didn’t bother asking before coming to London unannounced and didn’t book a hotel.”

“What? Couldn’t you book one like now?” Karl’s giggle is rolling.

Dream blinks at George. “I mean... I could if George wanted me to.”

“Well... it doesn’t matter now. You’ve spent enough time in my bed already.” George shrugs.
“I’ve got used to it.”

“Oh, I so wish someone was recording this conversation right now. Holy shit.” Karl continues on, clearly losing his mind over this.

“It’s not a big deal.” George tells them, palms clammy.

Sapnap scoffs. “All I know is if I showed up there tomorrow you would not let me or Karl sleep in your bed, George.”

Dream picks at his nails, avoiding George’s eye. George answers, voice weak. “Well it’s... it’s. I don’t know. It just happened.”

“Wow.” Karl snorts.

“Anyway.” Dream clears his throat. They’re both too embarrassed to do anything but stare forward at George’s monitors. “I don’t know. I can’t exactly stay forever, so probably another week or two. Then I’ll book a flight and George can have his bed back. Back to... normal.”

George’s heart sinks, for some reason.

“This is amazing.” Karl giggles again.

There’s this unspeakable notion that George contemplates, that time is passing all around him. Constantly slipping away and he is powerless to prevent it. As though the day that Dream leaves is already upon him now, and George has missed his chance to... he’s unsure of what exactly he’s missed.

Dream has already been here a week and George wants to keep track of every minute until he leaves.

He does not want to think of when or how this will come to an end.

An interlude of sorts occurs...

Time waves a white flag and says, hey actually, you can have this one for free. It passes slow and heady. A miracle. Slow enough it’s difficult to conceptualise time moving at all. That’s where

George finds himself caught.

On a precipice.

And the weather, which for so long seemed to have been nothing but a backdrop to the flat and Dream's presence, seems to occupy his mind almost entirely.

It's raining again. Constant, feathery rain that gets called 'spitting', stand in it and you don't feel yourself getting wet. But stand under shelter for a moment and you notice you are soaked through.

They spend more time than ever inside the flat and George knows of a million and one things he ought to be doing now. But he doesn't. There's time to worry and it will come later.

For now, Dream is here, on his laptop, typing away. George tries not to interrupt too much.

The weather is rainy and grey and typical.

Such a British topic that it is, perhaps it's not so odd that it weighs on his mind. He can't imagine any other country so obsessed with temperature as this one. Because the sky cannot make up its mind over wanting to be sunny or rainy or windy on any given day. Changing from warm to freezing cold in a matter of minutes.

George knows what this is. What he's doing.

Occupying his mind with mundane things like the forecast projection in the next few days instead of... No. Not that. Maybe they can go to Brighton if it clears up, visit Wilbur and walk along the promenade. Go to Pizza Hut like the fabled Vlog from distant past. Replace it with a new, actual vlog this time.

He suggests none of this to Dream. Biting instead at a loose hangnail clinging to his thumb and watching the rain hit his window.

A precipice.

There has been too much thinking going on lately in this head of his. It crowds his brain wholly, he doesn't know how to escape it.

When he glances over at Dream, his friend is already looking in his direction, fingers resting idly on his keyboard. Over the rain, George didn't hear him stop typing. There's that expression on his face, the one George has caught in passing a few times now. The one he doesn't yet have figured out. Eyes soft and brow slightly furrowed and entirely dedicated to George. His stomach turns over in a perfect pancake flip.

He stands sharply and Dream looks down, guilty. The mystery continues.

"We should do something."

How did he not realise it sooner? George is sick of the rain and sitting around and time standing still. Sick of waiting. The longer he spends thinking the more agitated he gets.

"Like what?" Dream asks after a moment, he is cross-legged on the couch, feet wearing a pair of George's comfiest, fuzziest socks. Bright pink with blue spots.

George shrugs. "I feel like we should be going somewhere. I don't want to bore you sitting around all day."

“I like being here. It’s chill.”

“Boring.” George rolls his eyes. “Let’s do something!”

“Okay.” Dream laughs at him. “Tell me what we should be doing and we can.”

“Let’s go out somewhere. Make your trip memorable! I’ve barely taken you anywhere and we haven’t even gone to visit anyone.”

“We don’t have to rush. I’m here for you, that’s made it memorable enough. You don’t have to entertain me constantly y’know? I’m happy writing and... chilling.”

George sighs, he cannot believe he is being betrayed like this. He approaches the carpet near the couch and lays on it.

“What are you doing?” Dream plants his feet on the floor, either side of George’s head so he’s looking down at him.

“I’m restless.”

“Okay.” Dream gives him a sock-toed nudge to the shoulder. “Let’s do something then.”

“Really?” George blinks up at his upside down face.

“If you’re that bored. Sure.”

Now this makes George feel bad, forcing Dream to entertain him because he doesn’t like stewing inside his own head. Usually, George feels pretty good about whining and getting his own way but today it doesn’t feel so good.

“It’s fine. Don’t worry. You can keep doing whatever you were doing and I’ll go... watch YouTube or something.”

“Shut up.” Dream huffs. “I wasn’t doing anything important. It’s actually something I wanted to show you, but um— later... maybe. Let’s go out.” He claps his hands together. And so it’s decided.

It’s not a surprise when they end up going out for something to eat. Most of their time together revolves around eating, thinking about what their next meal is going to be, whether it’s takeout, or cooking in George’s kitchen. Today George has convinced Dream he should try sushi for the first time and so they sit in a sleek sushi bar that only popped up on the high street beyond George’s flat about two months ago. They have one of those conveyor belt ordering systems where food comes around to you.

Dream goes along with what George tells him to order, a variety of dishes he figures Dream might like.

“Have you ever used chopsticks before?”

Dream quirks a brow.

George grins. “I’ll show you. It’s easy.”

The first thing that arrives is some avocado and cucumber maki that George thought might be palatable to start with - he's hardly a pro at knowing what the best things to order are himself. Hoping to impress his friend based on what he has tried and liked.

Dream makes an attempt with the sticks, but his grip isn't right and the roll slips straight out.

"What am I doing wrong?" He exclaims, trying to note the differences between his posture and George's.

"Try again, let me see." George cackles.

He tries, he fails and George laughs once more.

"Here, let me." Without thinking, George's hands come forward. "Your hand needs to move further back. You don't have to hold it so close to the end." Holding Dream's wrist steady with one hand he uses the other to pull the sticks into place. "Then your finger, here. You need to move it out of the way. I don't even know how you were holding them comfortable before." He takes Dream's fingers, sliding them into the right position.

Hands hovering nearby, George pulls back. "Try opening and closing now."

Dream does a loose motion. "Okay, try grabbing." George smiles, excited that they might have figured it out.

Dream makes another attempt, some maki gets gripped between his chopsticks and for a moment he's victorious. But Dream's fingers shift and the roll falls back onto the plate.

"Oops? I uh— My hand slipped. Sorry. Will you show me again? I think I've got it. Just want to be sure."

With an indulgent sigh, George takes Dream's hand again, pads of his fingers brushing Dream's digits, carefully manipulating them into place.

Dream has gone all quiet. George's gaze darts up quickly at Dream, who is looking at their loosely entwined hands. Lingering hesitantly, he's unsure of the next move here.

His fingers twitch and brush against the back of Dream's hand and that's enough for Dream to pull his hand away.

"Okay. Think you're good now." George swallows. Some nigiri is arriving on the conveyor belt and George is anticipating Dream trying the raw fish for the first time.

Outside, the rain hammers at the glass storefront all the way through their meal. Unwavering and drowning out the distinction between night and day. All set in a dreary sunless grey. The clouded sky holding the sun hostage as night seems to descent much quicker than usual.

By the time they've shrugged back into their damp coats and headed out onto the street the sky is several greys darker than before.

Water runs along the side of the road in rivers, heading with a gurgle to the gutters. People splash past with umbrellas raised and heads down. George and Dream can only look at one another and laugh, their earlier spell of awkwardness all but forgotten.

It's so much easier to focus on the weather and not any other number of things.

Dream does a dramatic rendition of *Singing In The Rain*. Dramatic because he is loud and off-key and doesn't know half the lyrics to the song. Making them up as he goes. George follows after. The rain and nothing else on his mind.

He can float by much easier this way, time passing without his input on it.

Chapter End Notes

chapter song — clueless by the marías.

bonus songs: tangerine by led zeppelin, let 'em in by wings, floated by peter cat recording co., sweet virginia by the rolling stones.

ode to a conversation stuck in your throat

Chapter Notes

quick fyi, you don't need to know anything about the dream smp plot to read the first part of this chapter. tw for mild violence for the same part.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

THE DREAM SMP *'WHAT REMAINS ARC'* CHAPTER 2 - THE DREAM TEAM

EXT. This scene is set on a sandy beach at the base of white crumbling cliffs. At the edge of the world or beyond it perhaps. The salty air is fresh, cooling to breath in and out. Beyond the sand, the sea is a stormy gray but there are no crashing waves or churning tides, no, this water is virtually still in motion.

A sky of pale-gray-probably-blue. Not quite sunset yet and so the color (red-pink-orange) barely brushes against the horizon where it meets the sea. There's a stillness to the air, like the water. As though Mother Nature herself has stopped everything around him. Dream-like and unreal, delicately fragile.

Here is DREAM. An Outlaw.

Bare feet in the shallow depths of the shore, tide washing over his ankles. Breeze whispering against his cheeks, across his forehead, his hair is tickled by the gentle flow.

He bears no armor. Unusual. But panic doesn't settle in. For once, the heart-racing dread that usually appears is nowhere to be found. No, here on this beach there is nothing but the sea, the sky and George. He doesn't feel worried at all.

Enter GEORGE. Our Everyman.

He stands a short distance away, Dream is turned away from him. But he knows distinctly he is there.

There is a lack of the usual ribbon in Dream's hair. His mask is not on. It's not like he hasn't worn it before in George's presence. It's still a rare occurrence. Like his armor, it protects him from many things.

A mask he wears for control. Control over his expression means his enemies can't tell what he's thinking. It means he always has the upper hand, with no worry of his emotions betraying him. George's privilege in seeing him unmasked was granted from the very beginning, as they laid the foundations of a simple life by a lake, growing crops and learning how to fight, defend and play together. Once upon a time, Dream's trust and friendship was earned freely, openly. With little limitations.

Times have changed. He's convinced the L'Manbergians it's some sort of scare tactic, with the creepy smile crudely etched onto the surface. No, the truth is, trust is much harder to earn nowadays.

It's why he'd decided to never show the face behind the mask again. Unless he had to, to bring them back together. George has always trusted him more when he can see his expressions laid bare.

GEORGE: Dream? (Voice cracking, softer than intended)

The man without the mask turns to him, backlit by sunlight. It makes him fuzzy around the edges. But George stands in full beaming light in front of him, squinting a little under the dying rays. Old warmth catches in Dream's chest. It's been so long since George smiled at him like that.

GEORGE: How did we get here?

He has an opportunity here, to come clean. To release the burden of knowing. To finally put them both on even ground again. But the words are hardened in his mouth, at the back of his throat. There is no point to the truth, it will not give him what he wants to hear.

George does not remember the path they took here, if he looked close enough at the sand, he would find no footprints leading back to the hills, no pile of armor in the sand. But he does not and so Dream knows he has him where he wants him.

DREAM: It doesn't matter. We're here now. Come with me. (And if his voice shakes, that's for no one to remember but him. His hand beckons, palm open, vulnerable.)

GEORGE: But what about— (George falters, guileless)

DREAM: Don't think about that. About anything else. I need you.

He glances to the cliffs, then back at Dream. Eyes warm and full of light. Dream laughs, caught breathless. He feels as though he's been waiting for this all of his life.

DREAM: Stay here with me.

His fingers fall open, moving toward George now. Guiding his calloused hand into another so they are held palm to palm.

DREAM: Please stay. (His voice is barely a whisper. So quiet it may have been the close brush of a sea breeze) I can't do this without you.

He awaits George's reply, but it's already slipping away like sand through his fingers.

It's too late. It was too late from the very beginning.

With a splitting pop-crack. The scene dissipates, falling away.

EXT. The fire crackles in front of him, the surrounding cave is silent and illuminated only by the bright glow of the fire, it sends creeping shadows up the cave walls. George jerks awake. Limbs stiff and tense. Metal chestplate digging into his stomach and his left arm numb from sleeping on his side. Sapnap shivers across from him. So close to the sad pile of flame that he's in danger of

setting himself ablaze. Perhaps that's his point.

He shoots George a questioning, worried look.

GEORGE: (He swallows the dryness in his throat) Just a bad dream.

Sapnap seizes a little at his wording, the fire grows brighter.

GEORGE: (quickly) A nightmare.

How did they get here? A time where even saying his name makes them tense and anxious. George yearns for a dream he can't shake. Fingers flexing then relaxing as he lets the tension leak away. There is no use dwelling on someone they'll never see again.

Not in the same way as on that beach.

EXT. There is nothing of note to where this fight takes place. Barely a fight, more of a standoff. They are hundreds of chunks away from their home, returning in that direction with no news but bad news. Standing before an open field, unburdened by destruction. Though headed towards a taste of it. This is simply a backdrop to the action.

Torrential downpour darkens the sky and it makes Dream's boots sink in the mud of the hill he stands on. He wears his best and only armor, dark black-purple Netherite forged by his own hands. Long deep green cloak pulled over his head and shoulders, hood low on his masked face. He knows how he looks to them, obstructing their path. A dark phantom waiting in the shadows and the cold.

There is George in his iron armor - who carries it well despite the Netherite Dream knows he proudly used to wear. Long lost to destruction and death. These must be old pieces hastily found and forged. Scavenged together. They stand no chance. Sapnap brings up his left flank in full diamond and still, this will not be enough.

He watches on as Sapnap pulls George to a standstill. Their hasty words are lost to the weather. Furious and howling. Sapnap approaches alone. George stays watching, bow tense in the hand at his side as he watches from his safe distance.

Sapnap stops short in front of him, a man scorned. They both know this will not be a fair fight. Not like any of those times they practiced in the plains by their little ramshackle home on the lake. Those were for fun. There is nothing fun about the angry set of Sapnap's jaw, the tension as George stands bow in hand, not aiming yet.

The rain is punishing as it falls, puddles saturating the ground, running down the hillside and pooling once it reaches the flatter land below. There is no peace, only chaos and Dream has always thrived well in chaos.

Sapnap strikes out first. Impatient as he's always been. Wanting nothing more in the world for this to all be over with. Does he not understand that what Dream wants more than anything is to go back to this, to what once was? That the only way out is through and he has found a path that they are too weak, too naive to pursue. Has George figured out that Dream comes to him in his dreams to remind him of this, to show him how much he cares. How much he wants. How he needs him.

An axe impacts Dream's shield with a dull thud, bouncing away quickly and it sends Sapnap retreating, the reflexive impulse of his own shield raising in return.

Dream drops his to the wet ground, a challenge clear enough. His masked face tilting. Sapnap holds his own tight, such a shame he will not play into the game. It does not matter. The axe comes back swinging with a mean vengeance, enraged. Cutting, slashing jabs that slice through the rain. Dream avoids them with ease. A lucky swing scuffs his shoulder, slashing the green of his cloak, grazing the Netherite shoulder piece. He does not falter, lands his own brutal hit in return and relishes in the way it lands firm, a gaping dent in the iron of Sapnap's armor.

He senses their grim satisfaction when he does stumble. Where for a moment Sapnap and George (still stood on the sidelines) falter. False hope they have caught sight of Their Dream in his hesitating movements. Sapnap pausing, axe lowering from its sure swing.

Dream moves quickly. Impossible, but he thinks he can hear George's breath catching over the rain and the thunder. A bow draws, line tensing. He strikes Sapnap hard and ruthless on the head, sending him tumbling back with an awful crunch of metal. His helmet falls in clean broken pieces to the wet muddy ground. Sapnap tumbling down the hillside and Dream marches on.

An arrow flies. Sinking into the ground next to Dream's foot. He pauses, squinting at where George stands defiant. Bow readied again. A warning shot.

Sapnap crawls, stumbling to his feet. He is caked in a fresh layer of muddy brown and deep red pouring at his temple.

Dream's heart thunders and skips - he tells himself it is not relief.

Would George do it? If Dream ignored his warning and pursued. Would George really let a fatal arrow fly? Could he kill his oldest friend? Let it sink into the soft skin of Dream's throat, protected only by his cloak. Really, he wants to know.

They match each other's stare. He can see all the betrayed, broken emotion on George's face and George can see exactly what he wants him to, nothing at all.

There is a roaring, guttural cry and a shining iron sword dances into view. Sapnap. Helmet-less and bloodied, sword drawn from his waist, shield and axe lost to his fall in the mud. He is relentless, every strike a personal vendetta. Because he knows as George knows. This is not the Dream they once knew. That they lay together in a flower-filled field with on a summer's day. staring up at the clouds and making stories. Of knights and gods and treasure.

In his peripheral, Dream observes George draw closer. Even as Sapnap fights for his life, there is time to spare. It's almost too easy.

There is little noise to Dream's movement, he barely seems to breathe, armor absorbing the sound of Sapnap's sword swings. Outmatched, Sapnap cannot keep fighting him like this.

Inevitably, Sapnap loses footing on the wet ground and falls backwards again. Dream propels himself forward, a clash of metal stops him sharp. George, sword drawn in front of him, brazenly protective of Sapnap's prone form.

GEORGE: (breathless, urgent) Don't you dare.

DREAM: I've missed you.

GEORGE: I'll kill you.

DREAM: Think you can take me? (He adjusts his weight, axe swinging idly in his gloved hands)

George scowls at him.

DREAM: How many duels did you win, back then? Just the ones I let you?

GEORGE: (snapping) Shut up. I don't want to talk about the past.

DREAM: (taking a single step closer) Don't you miss it? Don't you miss us? You can still come with me. Be with me. That's all I've ever wanted.

GEORGE: That's not what I want. (he hisses, voice shaking. so is the sword in his hand)

DREAM: (with all of his old fondness) We were so close, you and I.

GEORGE: I hate you. I will never stop hating you for what you've done.

And he has done so much. All of those friends they made. L'Manberg. George's throne. Whispers in the night that he has never stopped meaning, "*It's for you George. I did it all for you.*"

GEORGE: You're a liar. All you do is lie to me. (he shakes with rage)

DREAM: You don't hate me. Not really.

With a wet cough, Sapnap moves from his heap at the ground.

SAPNAP: (weak and uncertain) George?

Dream glances down at his old friend, the blood pouring down his temple, wet and so red in the rain. His face coloured by it.

Dark, ugly red. A color he has seen plenty of. Sapnap looks exhausted, they have all been for a long time.

George looks back at Dream, lip curling. Hatred rising once more as he is reminded of the damage Dream does to his so called friends. They hate his stupid mask. Though once they thought it was so very cool. They hate what it hides, what it shows. What it means now.

They cannot win this fight on their own.

GEORGE: (strength building in his voice) I would kill you if I could. I would wipe you from existence. (Then, after a beat) You're dead to me anyway.

DREAM: George.

His voice does not catch, because that would imply weakness and he is not weak because of this. Him.

"It's for you George. I did it all for you."

The rain swallows his voice. He doubts George would care to hear him anyway.

SAPNAP: (unwavering) Leave Dream. You don't gain anything from this.

DREAM: Oh, I don't know about that.

SAPNAP: You're not going to kill us.

He's right. This does not mean enough, to kill his old friends in some unimportant field so far from where they started. When he does come for them it will be at home, at the heart. He will show them how powerful he has become, how powerful they could have been if they had followed his footsteps. He would have given them the world once. Now he is ready to bring theirs crumbling down.

DREAM: I'll be seeing you both soon enough.

GEORGE: Fuck off, Dream. Don't come back here.

DREAM: Take care of yourself George, for me.

Dream's tattered cloak billows around him as he walks away. Victory burning bright through him, they have no idea what is yet to come.

EXEUNT.

"When did you write this?" George blinks, looking up from the screen of the laptop. Dazed and surprised.

"I got inspired, I guess. I know no one writes formal scripts really but..." Dream rubs at his neck, red heat is rising up it. Embarrassed under George's scrutiny. Which isn't scrutiny at all.

"Dream, this is..." George trails off, searching for the right words.

Dream's face manages a weak smile, head falling to the side. "Put me out of my misery. You're killing me."

"I'm not going to say anything bad. I'm trying to say the opposite!" George insists. He grows serious. "I really loved it. It was.... About me and you?" He's confused and flattered, Dream avoids his gaze.

"I don't know." Dream's face is red, a wonderful flush that makes him so entirely Dream. "I was thinking about our characters. And Sapnap. I'd love to go back and make, like, a prequel of how we all become friends. And I was thinking about how this Dream and George were best friends, then he took your throne. I— He lied to you. It's not- it's not anything we're gonna actually use for the SMP. But I don't know, I like writing. Just for me. It... helps I guess."

"It helps?"

“Yeah. Like thinking about stuff. Like what could have been. Or, what I want. What I really want... I’m putting it into my character, he’s a reflection of me.”

“You’re an evil villain who kills all his friends?”

“No. Not that part.”

“So, what then?” George blinks cluelessly.

“I- it doesn’t matter really. I’m glad you liked it at least.”

There is a careful deliberation to Dream’s writing that has him stuck. The choice he made to write something about him, George, ignoring all the bloodshed and betrayal. About how Dream needs George, even when they’re at their most opposite. He wants to reread it, fingers twitching to scroll back to the top of the word document and absorb everything.

But Dream is pulling away right in front of him. Withdrawing as he closes his laptop lid and averts his gaze, lips pursed like he’s unhappy. George doesn’t know what he’s missing.

He thinks what Dream needs most now is his support, unwavering. “You should show the others. This is really good Dream.” He says definitively.

“It’s not really- I don’t know. I didn’t exactly write it for them.” He looks up at George carefully.

“Well if not for them, you could use it for something. You could be a writer if you wanted to, Dream. Like a real one. You’d give me the first copy and I’d fold all the pages and put it with the other books over there.”

“Yeah, maybe one day. Anything is possible.” Dream smiles, pleased and pink. George is going to get cavities if he has to endure any more of those sugar-sweet grins.

GEORGE

‘REVELATIONS ARC’

CHAPTER 9 - ODE TO A CONVERSATION STUCK IN YOUR THROAT

INT. Late at night or early morning, with the curtains drawn the room is dark. Uncertainty lies in which is the more accurate descriptor. George’s bedroom is quiet. Two figures lie in the bed. One seems to be sleeping peacefully, this is Dream. Spread carelessly over his side. The other man,

George, lies awake. Sleep has not come so easy to him.

Thoughts trouble him and though his body begs for sleep, his mind races with unease.

He has not stopped thinking about Dream's script since he read it just a short few hours ago. His brain hurts and this creeping claustrophobia surrounds his being. Things aren't as easy as they used to be, before Dream came to London. As if common sense and logic have all but fallen out the window. He needs space to himself - space he once had before change was thrust upon him, with no warning but a phone call five minutes before.

When he gets out of bed it is careful and unthinking. Body moving of its own accord. He doesn't bother checking the time. Mindful of creaky floorboards, he crosses his room to the door. The thing about this flat is there isn't enough space to breathe. You're either in one room or the other and that isn't a far enough distance.

INT. George's living room/kitchen, messy and lived-in. The air is palpably still, eerie like all places get at a certain time of night. Light comes in through the windows on the opposite wall, but it offers little more than pale illumination, casting gaunt shadows across the room.

George grabs a blanket from the couch and wraps it around his shoulders. There on the cushioned seat is Dream's laptop where he left it earlier. George's fingers itch. He takes it carefully, cool surface against his warm fingers, he holds it to his chest, moving not to the comfort of the couch but instead to the kitchen. He sits on the countertop, in front of the kitchen window. The light coming in makes him look pale and worn. He searches the street and the sky. London light pollution means there are no stars to gaze fondly at, just contrails and clouds.

He opens the laptop like it is a bomb that might go off. The brightness as it wakes from its sleep practically blinds him in the dark. There is no password on Dream's computer, he turns the brightness down. Dream's word document script is already the only thing loaded on the screen.

Eyes scanning the document, he's not even reading it. Just hoping to find an answer to his anxiety, to the wordless question pounding at his chest. Dream has been here for a week and he knows it is a flimsy excuse to say, *I'm not used to you yet*, to the best friend who he has known for years of his life.

Dream is real, too real. So overwhelmingly vibrant that he is hard to conceptualise.

There is something here. There is something sitting in his ribcage.

The air in his lungs is loud as he exhales. He sets the laptop to the side, closes it firmly. Resting his head on his knees, arms around himself as he stares out at nothing for a good long time.

DREAM: (voice low) George?

Looking up, he is startled at the sight of Dream in the doorway. One foot in, one foot of the room. Hesitating on the edges. He looks barely awake, as though the doorway is the only thing keeping him upright. George's stomach lurches like he has been caught doing something he shouldn't have. The laptop beside him the evidence that will incriminate him for good. For doing what exactly? He can't say. This is his flat, his kitchen. He should feel free to do as he pleases. It's Dream who has barged in and ruined it all.

Of course. George thinks, of course, Dream would wake when all he wants is to internally

monologue alone. Feeling small, he untucks his curled up position, lets his legs hang off the counter. The blanket slips off his shoulders, exposing him to cold air. Goosebumps against the bare skin above the collar of his thin t-shirt.

GEORGE: Why aren't you sleeping?

DREAM: You weren't there. (answering like that is an answer at all, like George can make sense of it)

DREAM: (cont.) Why're you?

GEORGE: I uh— I wanted a glass of water?

Dream blinks, clearly unbelieving.

DREAM: You're sitting on the counter.

GEORGE: I know.

Dream hums thoughtfully. And then he does the worst thing imaginable, crossing the room to the kitchen. Coming up to the counter next to George. He catches sight of the laptop next to George and his eyebrow twitches, expression unreadable as his gaze meets George's. His eyes are round, an earnestness on his features that is reserved solely for moments like these. He moves deliberately in front of George. Between his parted thighs and reaches out, gathering the blanket from his sides and pulling it up until it's properly in place around George's shoulders. His hands linger there, holding firm and George dares not to breathe. Dream searches his face.

George panics, desperate to fill the silence.

GEORGE: —I had a dream about you the other night. (he blurts out, surprising even himself)

Dream lets go, stepping away. George tries not to show his relief.

DREAM: Oh?

Then:

DREAM: You don't usually remember your dreams.

How Dream knows this is lost to years of friendship - the same way George knows Dream used to collect coins and has that gene that makes coriander (or cilantro for Americans) taste like soap. He doesn't know how he knows it, he just does.

GEORGE: I did this one though.

DREAM: What happened in it?

GEORGE: Nothing really. You were there in a mask, with armour and an axe. I guess it reminded me of your script. Similar to what I dreamed, I guess.

GEORGE: (cont.) Then you were reaching out for me.

DREAM: Reaching out?

GEORGE: For me to take your hand.

DREAM: (gone still) Did you? ...take it?

George notices he's a little higher than Dream sat here. Can see the way the hair on top of Dream's head must have been flattened against his pillow.

GEORGE: I did.

Green eyes meet his, honeyed and searching.

DREAM: (whispering) What happened next?

GEORGE: Nothing really. We fell through this empty space and I sort of woke up.

DREAM: Huh. Weird.

GEORGE: Yeah.

A beat. Dream frowns and his searching look slips carefully away.

DREAM: (gesturing to the sink. awkward) Um, did you want water?

GEORGE: If you don't mind.

DREAM: Sure. (he shrugs, no big deal)

Moving to the cupboard he grabs two glasses and takes them to the sink where he fills them.

Something is unravelling slowly, like a thread caught on a hangnail being pulled. George only needs to take it between his fingers and tug. Let the whole line of stitches come loose. But he's so scared of ruining something that has been so carefully constructed.

Dream hands over a glass of water, standing a little further away from where he was before.

DREAM: I've been thinking.

DREAM: (cont.) I'm really glad I came. At first, I was so worried about... making a mess of things by showing up here. That I'd say the wrong thing or... I was pushing you into letting me stay.

GEORGE: You're my friend. I wasn't going to let you wander the streets or anything.

DREAM: I know but—

GEORGE: If this is about what Sapnap said, about how I wouldn't do the same for them as I do for you, it's not true. I'd do the same for any of you.

DREAM: Okay...

Somehow, George gets the feeling this isn't what Dream wanted to hear. He places the glass of water on the counter, untouched. Rubs his hands against his thighs. The blanket falls off his shoulders again, he watches Dream track the movement, but he doesn't fix it this time.

DREAM: I'll probably be going back soon is all. I mean, I'll have to book a flight. My mom has been asking when I'm coming back and there's business shit I've been putting off. I mean, things have got to... get back to normal?

DREAM: (carefully, deliberately) Do- do you want things to go back to normal?

But George's head is quickly filling with white noise, not quite hearing anymore.

No, he thinks. You could stay here forever. You can stay. Just stay.

And then George thinks, *oh*.

That loose thread has got caught on his hangnail after all, falling apart at the seams. Unsalvageable. George thinks he knows what's happening here.

DREAM: George?

He chokes to find any available words, it feels like a heartbeat and an inhale tripping over each other as he tries to speak.

DREAM: You think I should book it?

GEORGE: I think- I think you should do what's best for everyone. Back to- back to how things should be. It's your life, your decision.

DREAM: Oh-okay. I'll- I can do that.

He looks disappointed. Put out. And George would have sympathy, really he feels awful, but all he can think of is the disaster unfurling in his mind. He needs more than ever to be away from Dream who is shooting him a too-big smile. That's clearly forced but still makes George's heart - yes his heart - skip a beat.

Dream hasn't drank any of his water either. The glass sits next to George's on the counter. Silence floods the air, Dream looking at George and that's just it.

Oh no. He thinks. What do I do with all this? Where does it belong and how do I get rid of it? There's no room to panic, no room to breathe. To wrap his head around this newly discovered fact that he—

DREAM: You okay there?

George is pulled back to the kitchen. *His kitchen* . A quiet little reality where the tap drips (he'd almost forgotten about the leaky splash noise it makes) where the air is still and Dream is standing next to him.

GEORGE: Yes. (it's a lie, a trembling-lipped one.)

DREAM: What's going on with you?

With me? What's going on with you? He wants to say, to shout, to scream. Wandering into my life, my kitchen and turning the fucking world upside down. Of writing about me and then telling me you don't want to overstay your welcome.

He has moved closer in a split-second instant. No longer leaning back against the counter. Back where it all started; invading George's space. Not understanding the perilous tread of this conversation.

GEORGE: Me?

DREAM: Yes George, with you.

GEORGE: Nothing's going on with me.

DREAM: There's obviously something wrong.

There's a shift here. Growing into a monster of its own as it gets tired and frustrated and someone starts asking it too many questions. George feels it unsettled in his stomach.

GEORGE: Well, there isn't. So... (he won't, can't, look at Dream)

It's unavoidable. Dream fills his vision. George is exhausted trying to put up with it. He needs to leave this kitchen. He thinks of orange slices, shared meals and hugs in the middle of the night and suddenly this is no safe space at all.

DREAM: You're a bad liar. It's written all over your face.

GEORGE: There's nothing written on my face. Stop seeing things that aren't there, Dream. Just... go back to bed.

DREAM: You're proving my point, avoiding a conversation. Just talk to me.

The thing is, Dream doesn't know when to stop. It's the same reason he impulsively bought a plane ticket to England to see his friend. Why he must be the best, always win. His *Too Much* gene activating. Not thinking before he speaks or acts. Pushing until he gets what he wants. He's always known exactly which of George's buttons to push.

GEORGE: Leave it.

DREAM: I'm not leaving it! You're the one sitting in your kitchen at god knows what time in the morning. Looking like your world is ending.

GEORGE: You don't know me.

DREAM: I know you, George.

A beat.

DREAM: You can't play dumb with me.

GEORGE: Don't be a dick. Not everything has to involve you.

GEORGE: (cont.) And you definitely don't know everything about me, Dream.

DREAM: I know enough. I know something's wrong, that it has been since I got here. That I'd rather you just tell me if you want me to fuck off so then I know. God, all the time I've known you and I'm sick of guessing, of trying to figure out what's up with you. Waiting for you to—

GEORGE: Will you shut up! Please shut up okay.

He stands quickly, feet planting firmly on the ground, the change in perspectives does nothing for his panic. Dream's as close as ever, breathing hard.

DREAM: (voice quiet) If I shut up will you tell me?

GEORGE: God, you're so— Why do you—?

He wants to shake Dream by the shoulders, he wants to pull him to his chest and— George shudders, mouth hardening in a line.

Dream softens visibly, shoulders slumping.

DREAM: Look. You're my best friend. Whatever it is, you can trust me.

It's so funny how quickly your perspective can change. How a realisation can appear in your mind like a switch being flipped. George thinks that this realisation has been a long time coming. Right under his nose and he's only noticed it. He's embarrassed and it doesn't even make sense because Dream knows nothing - he's said as much. Expression worried and that hurts, knowing he's the cause of it.

There has to be some way to disappear. To stop time so he can make an escape without Dream noticing. There's no chance to process anything when Dream is right here and George wants to scream or cry or sort of let himself crumble to the ground. His own flat and he's never felt so trapped.

GEORGE: I— um. I'll. One minute. I've got- um.

He flails over words, trips over his own feet as he tugs his body away and out of the front door hyper aware of every muscle in his body.

INT. The hallway outside of George's flat is cold and without answers to his problems. He's still as unsteady and somewhere along the way he's lost his blanket.

This is a definite overreaction, he recognises. Yet it does not stop the panic from overtaking him. It will have to do.

How stupid can he be. The hallway is freezing and his head is no clearer and Dream will definitely think he's lost his mind now. The old wood underfoot offers no reward for being stood on for so long. He barely registers the door opening. In fact, George's body flinches at the sound of his name coming out of Dream's mouth.

DREAM: George, what the hell?

GEORGE: Dream.

Swallowing is hard, he can barely speak over the tightness in his throat.

Dream's look is searching, eyes full of concern and worry. He steps forward, not touching but close enough they could brush against each other if George let himself sway forwards like he wants to. George can't handle it. Fuck. What the fuck?

DREAM: I'm sorry, okay? Please George.

His voice is pitched up, like the more panic he sees in George's eyes the more panicked he's getting.

GEORGE: Can you- I just need a minute. Or—

—Or I'm going to tell you that I love you. That I'm in love with you. And I only figured it out about three minutes ago.

—Or I'm going to kiss you. This is the first time I've ever even thought about kissing you.

And if that thought doesn't destroy George's brain enough. He's fairly certain he must make some sort of pained noise because Dream's hand lands on his bicep, blinking down at him with soft concern. It's too much for any man to handle.

DREAM: George?

GEORGE: Please. Go back inside.

DREAM: I can't. I can't do that.

DREAM: (whispering) It's just me.

GEORGE: I know!

He laughs, abrupt and choking. Dream's concern grows in the tilt of his brow.

GEORGE: You're—

—*You're too much.* George exhales slowly. Careful of the heart that's currently in his mouth.

DREAM: Come on. Back inside. It's cold as hell out here.

A sadness has settled in his expression, like a kicked puppy and it makes George feel wretched. He acquiesces. Dream opens the door and lets George move past him. Back in the living room. It doesn't feel like his own. Like he's stood in a simulation of his own home and if he tries to touch anything he'll just phase right through it.

He sees his blanket where it must have fell somewhere on his journey from the kitchen to the front door, close to the couch. He goes and stands on the rug, relieved when he can feel it's soft fibres under foot.

DREAM: This is my fault.

George stands lost.

DREAM: Earlier, about staying here and things going back to... back to normal. I've been pushing you to answer in the way I wanted you to. To say what I wanted to hear. But that's not how this works, right? So, we should forget it, that I ever said anything.

DREAM: You've made your feelings clear, so I'll stop pushing. I don't want to make you uncomfortable.

GEORGE: Okay...

He's not quite sure what's happening here. Dream seems to have come to some sort of conclusion about... leaving?

DREAM: It's like what you said before, too much.

George can't stand it, he wants to reach out, take Dream's sad face in his hands and make it better.

GEORGE: Too much.

His mouth feels full of sand, weighed down by it.

DREAM: (his smile is stoic, george's heart is aching) I've not exactly given you much space since

I got here, have I?

It's not that. I don't know what conclusion you've come to. But it's not space I want between us, George thinks.

There's something here. Too much of it.

DREAM: I'll sleep on the sofa tonight, alright? Give you your space back. Book a flight in the morning.

He makes a half-aborted step to George, like he wants to reach out, touch him. But he shakes his head sadly and heads away to George's bedroom.

Finally alone and George feels like crying. He wants to laugh. How was he ever so stupid? How did he not figure it out sooner?

But this thing, burning white-hot in his chest demands something of him he wasn't expecting.

The difference between I love you and I'm in love with you.

What the fuck is he supposed to do with this?

EXEUNT.

chapter song: ode to a conversation stuck in your throat by del water gap

oh man oh boy. huh. this is a real predicament, what the heck.

bonus songs: us and them by pink floyd, sweet tooth by maya hawke, gimme all your love by alabama shakes, simulation swarm by big thief.

short and sweet

Chapter Summary

while the spelling and grammar errors in other chapters are purely accidental and a result of my lack of diligent editing, those errors in this chapter are 100% intentional!

formatting errors, however, are because of my complete lack of knowledge on how to format correctly on this website. so sorry if things are a little funky!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

NOTES

[A process of figuring things out, from the beginning. Found in the notes app on Dream's phone.]

↳ next video: Minecraft But It Rains Mobs. Something to Give Friends Money???
Minecraft But blocks Attack You.

↳ Build social media presence: more streams, tweet more.

↳ vid. working titles:

Giving My Friends \$\$\$ To Spend On Amazon

Giving George \$5000 To Spend On Amazon (more direct = more clickable. Introduces

ppl to george.)

↳ song rec - idontwannaspeakagain — quadeca

↳ Monday recording with George and Sap moved to Thursday. (George busy)

↳ Time's we've got George to swear on stream. First to 5 wins £500

Sapnap — 1

Me — 2

↳ REMINDER: Need to sleep at least 4 hrs. Stream/record. Mom visiting !!!!!

↳ FUCK

↳ REMINDER: Don't stay awake for 48hrs in a call with the boys right before ur mom visits.

↳ REMINDER: Mental breakdown impending. ((Ur an idiot.))

***THIS REMINDER CONFLICTS with LIFE and SANITY and LIVING.

↳ Maybe those dnfers are onto something here

↳ Minecraft Unsolved Ideas: Minecraft lore? - discs, ruins, shipwrecks. What happened to the world before the player? Herobrine. Minecraft world is infinite.

↳ perhaps the falling in love with george is the friends we made along the way.

↳ War stream TBC. waiting on Wilbur to confirm availability.

↳ Listen, it feels weird to write in here like a diary but i don't know where else to put it so after this is done i'm gonna lock this note and never think about it again. But i've never thought much about sexuality before. Like pretty happy being straight yk. Women are so great thats without question. And i've never even thought about guys before (thats a lie to the fat crush on percy jackson when u were a kid) but now it's like... him? Really. Four years of friendship and now i like him. And i think i have all along because all i've ever wanted was to be closer to him. To figure out his secrets, felt so happy when he calls me his best friend, jealous of anyone elses closeness with him.

↳ So far, i don't think he's noticed anything different. Which is good. It's not like i want him to notice or anything.

↳ i want to tell him just so he can let me down easy, so i can move on and pretend it never happened but i don't want to lose him or scare him away so i can't do shit. I'm stuck here.

↳ REMINDER: BUY GROCERIES DUMBASS U CAN'T LIVE OFF GATORADE AND HOT POCKETS FOREVER.

↳ Tone indicators to remember for using twitter

/j - joking

/hj - half joking

/s - sarcastic

/srs - serious

/p - platonic

/r - romantic

/t - teasing

/nm - not mad or upset

/neg - negative connotation

/pos - positive connotation

/c - cospasta

/l - lyrics

/ij - inside joke

/rt - rhetorical question

↳ okay this fake vlog thing is so dumb and definitely going to backfire.

↳ REMINDER: remind george to edit the vlog prank video.

↳ if we ever met in real life i don't think i'd know what to do with myself. I want to kiss you sometimes. I want to do more than that and it fucking scares me so bad. I don't think i'll ever get used to this feeling.

↳ REMINDER: ask dad if he still has his record player and all his own vinyls.

↳ "You gave me something
I understand
You gave me loving in the palm of my hand
I can't tell you how I feel
My heart is like a wheel
Let me roll it, let me roll it to you
Let me roll it, let me roll it to you

I want to tell you
And now's the time
I want to tell you that you're going to be mine"

Dad, I'm blaming this one on you. Now I'll think of him even when we listen to music together. He's ruined wings! I miss hanging out with you sometimes. There's a sooners game tomorrow we should watch together.

↳ Times we've got George to swear on stream. First to 5 wins £500

Sapnap — 2

Me — 2

In dispute: George was reacting to the situation of dying in the game as a whole, not only Sapnap killing him. Whatever. I'll give him this one. I'll win this easily anyway.

↳ I can't believe I'm losing sleep over this, over you. You're so dumb and you never take anything seriously. You're a baby when you don't get your own way and it's probably my fault because I want to indulge you way too often. Sapnap definitely knows something's up.

↳ tweet idea:

George: plays and codes Minecraft

Also George: thinks you can tame rabbits in Minecraft

this is so dumb. bad tweet. george brainrot or whatever the fuck people say

↳ It's crazy how much has changed, how much we've grown up since YouTube. I told you to come with me and you did. Look at us now. Look at you!

↳ Remember before all of this when I worked at Apple and you were doing freelancing and I used to stay up with you and we'd both miss a night's sleep to get your coding done. We work well as a team. Some part of me has always been with you.

↳ You've left a mark on me, untouched. Does that make sense? You have changed me, unintentionally. My love for you has changed me

↳ I just had this dream about u.
nevermind. forget it. I'm definitely not writing that down.

↳ REMINDER: PICK UP DRISTA @ 5 PM

↳ SANITY UPDATE: Sanity Not Found.

↳ You say these things, stupid simple shit when you're tired. About wishing that I was

there with you. What am I supposed to do with that? Probably not think about it much longer than it's rolled off your tongue.

It's all I can think about.

↳ Dear Dresm of the distant future aka tomreow when you wake up with plane tickets to London booked.

Don't panic. I know u're panicking but seriodusly come on, you can't just blame this on me, past Dream. I know we're tired and a little manic right now but honestly this is a good idea. In fact you're gonna thank me, you're gonna absolutely be beside yourself because now you can stopn thinking about all the things you want to say to goerg and can actually do them! Hey, you can't pussy out in person, right? It's gonna be easy, you're going to go there and tell George that you think about him all the time, about his face and and his stuofid smile and his laugh and how bad all his jokes are and how you think you cvould fall apart sometimes just frum looking at him. There's no one else but him, He's bene your best friend for so long and nothing can ever change that. Enjoy London pal, you can thank me (you) for this one. Yu're Welcome. :)

↳ Oh for fucks sake,

↳ REMIDNER: INVENT TIME MACBHING. GO BACK IN TIME. KILL PAST SELF

↳ i'm on a plane and this was a terrible idea.

↳ Dear past Dream, you fucking suck and I hate you. Choke, die etc. What is wrong with you??!! How far off the deep end is too far? How did you fully allow us to dissociate getting onto a plane. This is dangerous you stupid motherfucker. I am going to end your existence. Love, Dream.

↳ FUCK YOU

↳ I'm not doing this. I'm getting off this wifi-less tincan and back onto another one straight home. THIS WAS A BAD IDEA.

↳ this wasn't that bad of an idea..

↳ i'm on the damn plane now, and it's not like i have to TELL george if i see him. I'll just be normal.

↳ I can do this. I can do this. I'm doing this.

↳ it's fine.

↳ it's so fucking good to see him. It's not even as hard as i thought it was going to be. I got so lost in this obsession with you that i forget that we're friends first and foremost. It's almost too easy if i don't think too hard or linger too often or think about the fact i'm sleeping in the same bed as you.

↳ i;m sleeping in the samne bed as you

↳ i'mg going to lose myu mind

↳ the whispering
tells me there's a wanting

the whispering
is soft and sincere

I found this post it note, left by some nauseating literature student or yearning lover in a place where secrets are celebrated.

↳ i want to say so much but its best if i whisper, quiet enough you won't hear. In the middle of the night where my words can float away and i can remain unaccountable.

↳ I'm not used to you yet. --That's what you said. That you need time and space to get used to me and I feel stupid. So caught up in my own self-centred need to be seen by you that I didn't think about what you wanted. that I could just show up in London and you'd know without me saying anything at all. That's not something i can just put on you.

↳ I can't wish someone elses feelings into being the truth. It's not enough.

↳ In the morning he is like a content cat curled up. I want to wake up next to him for the rest of my life. Face sleep-flushed, brown eyes falling shut even as he tries to keep them open, hair messy for that brief moment before he inevitably gets up and brushes through it smooths out the sleep-creased waves. I think about just reaching out, sliding my fingers across his cheek, pushing them into his hair.

↳ Sometimes George speaks like someone who has a lot of eloquence but then he says the absolute dumbest shit I've ever heard.

↳ Times we've got George to swear on stream. First to 5 wins £500

Sapnap - 2

Me - 3

Okay, it's not cheating just because I'm sitting next to him. Nick can't dispute this when I let his last one slide. (Winners POV to be clear.)

↳ It's so strange living in George's life everyday. Waking up when he does, living through his morning routine. Showering in his bathroom and using the same body wash, the same brand of toothpaste. And still I end up feeling as though I don't really know him. That there's secrets he still keeps from me, his best friend.

To be clear, I don't go snooping through his life and belongings looking for more information. This one sort of stumbled across me. One minute I'm searching the bottom drawer of his bedside cabinets for a spare UK compatible charger for my laptop and the next minute I'm staring at a box of condoms like they've insulted me and my family.

It's nothing really, it should be nothing. Any of my other friends I'd probably take the charger, shut the drawer and forget about it five minutes later. But this is George. And despite the countless shower thoughts and dreams I may or may not have had about him I never expected I'd be forced to reckon with the idea of George having sex.

↳ I don't know what I'm doing here.

↳ Everytime I wake up first in the morning I find us tangled together, limbs crossing.
My arm around your waist, my hand on your wrist, our legs crossed at the ankles.
Every morning I wish for five more minutes of just this and nothing else.

↳ I thought I was good with words but I find myself speechless. He doesn't know what he looked like under those lights in Camden. I wish I'd taken a photo to remember it.
If he could see what I saw.

↳ And I won't forget the way we reached out - was it you or me who joined our fingers together?

↳ I want to take you back to Florida, to my dad's garage with its record player and old vinyls and sway along to the songs with you.

↳ I've been writing something for you.

↳ Maybe I can do it. Put all my cards on the table. Confess to you without having to confess anything at all. Let you figure it out

↳ I'm so fucking stupid.

↳ I'm sorry George. I'm so sorry. I wanted you to figure me out without ever considering that it wouldn't be the reaction I wanted. The reaction I made up in my head where you read the script and understood completely and told me you've loved me all along, that we're on the same page. But I've always been projecting, buying into my own self-indulgent, self-destructive bullshit.

↳ It's only been a week and it's over.

↳ Your living room is cold to sleep in.

↳ I'm sorry George.

↳ There's so little time left and already it feels like there are miles between us but I don't know. I'd let you hurt me a thousand times over if I could just stay here just a while longer. I'd let it kill me.

Chapter End Notes

chapter song: short and sweet by brittany howard

bonus songs: idontwannaspeakagain by quadecca, let me roll it by wings, are we still friends? by tyler, the creator.

one more weekend

Chapter Notes

this fic is unedited from this point on so inconsistencies may occur as i'm still working through the rest of the writing!! apologies if there are more mistakes/weirdness. i'll get to it eventually :) thanks for ur patience!!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Everything is constantly ending.

What is life but an ending?

The end of a day, a week, a month, a year. The last movie you watched, The book you just finished. The end of a song, a sentence, a thought. A moment.

The end of a trip to London with your best friend who you're in love with. Who means more to you than just a best friend.

Like all things, this moment has reached its last page and so completes the cyclical ritual of life.

There is pretty much one weekend left. It falls hard and fast with a distinct taste of uncertainty. Even George's cat senses the unease, she has taken to wandering between Dream and George for attention like she can't quite decide who needs her comfort more.

"Dream." George sounds out his name carefully because he needs to be sure. He hasn't even turned around in his chair yet.

They're sat in George's bedroom in relative silence, Dream on his laptop and George on his PC, getting on with work coding and editing, at least that's what George is doing. He bumps the headphones off his ears, Kid Cudi fading away. Turning and looking over to Dream who sits on the bed, legs crossed. He hasn't even heard George call his name, earbuds still tucked into his ears, too absorbed by whatever he's working on. George doesn't know how he can say goodbye to this. To Dream sat in his space doing his own thing. He's brought this upon himself, George knows there is nothing to do about it. Not unless he admits what he barely knows.

Strangely, as last night faded into today George has come to notice things don't feel as dramatically different as yesterday's startling realization suggested they would.

Now that George has had a restless night to steep in the fact he's in love with Dream, it's overwhelming, sure, but things make sense. Now he's less confused about what he feels in general and more confused about what to do with what he knows he feels. It's a disorientating new normal. It's him and Dream.

Dream frowns when he's concentrating hard, a line between his eyebrows, steady determination on

his face. His hands skid across the keyboard precisely. George wonders if Dream gets thrown off like he does when switching from his PC keyboard to his laptop, the different spacing and feel of the keys messing up his typing.

"Dream." He says again, this time Dream must hear because he looks up and quickly removes an earbud.

"Did you say something?"

What follows is a conversation between friends who are stuck. Not on the edge of a cliff or anything quite so dramatic. Just between understanding what they know and what the truth is.

"Yeah. I just—" George sighs out, "I wanted to say sorry, I guess. For last night. I was— it was.." And so the sure certainty of getting through this conversation immediately slips away.

"Dude, don't even worry about it. You were overwhelmed and I wasn't exactly helpful." Dream runs a regretful hand through his hair.

"I'm still sorry, I was overreacting and it wasn't really to do with you—"

"Hey, I get it, no sweat. I'm going home and things will go back to the way they were before." He smiles affectedly. "Hopefully next time we do something like this, I— we're more prepared for it."

"I still want to spend time with you, before you go. I know last night I said.." He doesn't finish the thought, Dream gets it, "But I have enjoyed having you here."

"Next time we'll do it better, I'll get a hotel and we'll invite Sapnap. Or you could come to Orlando and we could get Karl and Quackity too."

George's eyes widen excitedly at the prospect. "Yes, definitely."

KARL

dudeeee are u alive? blink twice if ur alive?

KARL

any blinkers?

GEORGE

Blinks once

KARL

NOOOOOO GEORGEEEE

KARL

georgenotfound, he will be remembered forever in our hearts. in his life he had many accomplishments but unfortunately, those don't include ever being a sex haver. rest in pieces

GEORGE

You forgot I had sex with your mum

KARL

sometimes I still hear his voice from beyond the grave.. so sad

GEORGE

Was there a point to this or??

KARL

HOP IN VC WITH WITH ME AND ALEX

GEORGE

I'm with Dream

KARL

ur always with dream, he can be here too

GEORGE

He's leaving soon though, I wanna spend time with him

KARL

he's leaving? this is news to me

KARL

MOM SAID IT'S MY TURN TO HAVE THE DREAM

GEORGE

K we'll join but probably not for too long

KARL

we'll see about that >:)

There's a fifties movie playing on whatever channel is on TV. James Dean and Natalie Wood lie together, Wood looking down at a casual-cool Dean, her face brushing his. A fire crackling behind them.

In perfect mimicry, Dream lays on the floor on the rug in front of the television. Eyes closed, occasionally glancing over at the screen, sometimes mouthing a line he thinks he remembers. George watches Dream watching the TV from the couch whilst pretending to scroll through his phone. As close as he dares to get.

"We should make breakfast." Dream tells him before looking over, head-turning to face George. Who thinks, *how have I not noticed you before*. He wants to feel that angled jaw under his fingers, learn how Dream responds to his touch.

"It's four pm." George squints back at him.

"George." his tone is deadly serious. "It's never too late for breakfast."

This is one of the last moments. Making breakfast in the afternoon. Making a mess of George's kitchen, digging through cupboards and the fridge. Dream wants pancakes when George assumed breakfast at four pm meant a bowl of cereal and a glass of juice at most.

They don't look up a recipe because George claims he knows how to make them without one and Dream really, really wants to see this happen. They're lucky that his mum has made sure he always has the basics like flour and sugar in his cupboards because otherwise they'd be fucked. Then they would definitely be having cereal.

Dream makes the first mistake, tipping over the flour and getting it on the counter, George cackles at the spillage and blows on it, sending flour dust up into the air, a coating of white on their faces and hair, looking like very shitty vampire facepaint.

"We are not starting this." Dream gives George a firm look and it's so tempting. George thinks he'd kiss Dream even with flour on his face and in his hair.

Ignoring the impulse, he retaliates by flicking more flour in Dream's direction.

"We are so not doing this." Dream affirms as more flour lands on his t-shirt.

"George. How old are you?"

"Older than you."

"Exactly, yet you're a child. *A child, George.*"

George flicks more flour, Dream exhales slowly, his eyes glittering and George knows he's pushing buttons. This is exactly the reaction he wants. Dream looks at George, then to the counter at George's hand, poised to send more flour in his direction.

"No." He says once, sternly but smiling like he can't help himself. George flicks anyway. In sudden motion, Dream scoops flour into his hands and flourishes them. Throwing the cloud of white at his face. George coughs, swatting the air and laughing, Dream grabs his arm to stop him from falling as he moves without care.

"You're the worst." George blows air out and flour surrounds them.

Dream just smirks, steps back. He has left a perfect flour hand mark on George's jumper sleeve, stark white contrasting the black.

They get the pancakes done eventually, George's kitchen counter is a mess and there's a streak of flour in his hair from where he'd run his hand through it. They sit back in front of the television, both on the rug this time. *Rebel Without a Cause* is coming to an end as movies do. Nothing lasts forever after all.

They watch through the credits and advertisements that fall after, then whatever movie starts next, eating pancakes that are surprisingly good for how badly the process of making them went. George thinks about the egg whites and yolk dripping down the counter and winces. It's going to be so difficult to clean up.

"I can't wait to see Patches, I didn't realize how much I would miss her." Dream's looking at George's cat, sleeping away on the couch.

"Only a day left, then you'll get to see her." George swallows.

"It's strange, I think I'm going to miss your cat too now."

It's a funny thing, isn't it? How attached you can become in so little time.

"She has that effect on people."

"Yeah, she does." But Dream's looking right at George when he says it. And that is difficult to ignore.

"These pancakes are better than I expected," George says, instead of what he wants to.

"If we've gained one thing from me being in London it is that I am good at cooking."

"You're alright, but I did help with these pancakes so you can't take all the credit Dream."

"George, don't make me laugh at you. The flour? The eggs, *multiple eggs!* That you dropped all over."

"That was your fault! You knocked me on purpose."

"You were the one being antagonistic about who got to stir the batter. Again, like a child."

"Oh *wawawa*, Dream."

"Yeah *wawawa*. You are the only baby here."

Conversation continues on as expected.

PLATO : *Jim, do you think the end of the world will come at nighttime?*

JIM : *Uh, uh. At dawn.*

— *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955)

The alarm goes off on Dream's phone. He turns it off and rolls over. A hand drifts across George's stomach, settling down gently, George is still too lost in sleep to notice it quite yet. Five minutes later, a second alarm rings.

It's too early to be awake. George knows that alarm means it's five minutes past five in the morning, the sun will be barely starting to sluggishly rise. It's now that he notices the hand. He lays motionless for a long moment as he contemplates it.

It's a welcome feeling, Dream's fingers caught in the material of the t-shirt he's sleeping in, his pinky finger sat on the bare skin of George's stomach where his shirt has bunched up. George can't contemplate for too long, however, as Dream's alarm is still going off and it's growing annoying.

"Dream." He groans, voice heavy. It pains him to even lift his head from the pillow.

The alarm is ringing, startlingly loud in the quiet of the morning. Dream just groans and shoves himself further under the covers, the hand slips away and George wants to reach out for it, take Dream's fingers and place it back. George thinks of that first morning, Dream engulfed in quilt. Barely more than an elbow and a foot poking out from underneath. How different he is now just a few weeks later. Dream's head of hair is all that's visible from this angle.

"Get the 'larm." George huffs.

There's a muffled 'no' from the quilt-covered Dream. George's tiredness leaves him, he sits up, spots Dream's phone on the bedside cabinet and reaches over for it. "What're you—?" He hears, but George is already on his knees, the voice comes from somewhere below his ribcage. He picks the phone up and snoozes it then sits back with the device in his hand.

"Idiot. Turn it off properly before it goes off again." He shoves it at Dream to unlock, setting it down with finality where Dream's shoulder meets his collarbone. Dream's eyes are full and rounded, looking right at George.

"What?" George huffs.

"Nothing." Dream closes his eyes, makes no other move but to swallow. George sighs.

"You'll miss your flight nimrod."

"We've got time." Dream mutters, but his hand appears out of the covers and takes hold of the phone. Dream glances at George again, then unlocks it, turning the alarms off completely so they won't be bothered again. "You coming with me to the airport?"

George shrugs. "If you want."

"Of course I do. We've got to have a proper goodbye."

Despite George forcing Dream awake. He doesn't say anything when they sit in bed for a little while longer.

SAPNAP

Heard you're coming home??

SAPNAP

I thought this thing was happening for like another month at least? What happened?

DREAM

I'll call you when I'm back in Orlando.

DREAM

It's hard to explain over text

SAPNAP

Sure thing brother. No worries

SAPNAP

You good though?

DREAM

Will be dude

The weather has decided to turn unbearably icy cold. Though it's not raining, the chill wind stings Dream's skin. Luckily, they're only darting to the street where the Uber is. Dream only hopes the driver isn't too mad considering they made him wait a good five minutes. Thankfully, he only sighs in greeting when they finally clamber in, George shuts the door behind them. It's Dream's fault they had to rush, he hadn't remembered to pack his laptop and charger away yesterday and so they'd had to unzip his locked suitcase in the moments before leaving and quickly shove it inside.

"I don't think we're even going to be late." Dream says to George in surprise as he checks the time.

Halfway to the airport and George hasn't stopped rambling about irrelevant shit. It's not the way Dream wanted to say goodbye. George won't shut up and Dream's hands are sweating. At least it's sort of ruining the ability to spill his guts when George is so distracted. Makes it easier to pretend all is well. That leaving isn't the end of the world. The ground has been laid for a future trip to Orlando in a couple of months, with the other boys joining them too. So he can't let himself feel too sad about leaving. He feels it anyway.

They arrive at the North Terminal of Gatwick Airport and George walks Dream into the Departure entrance. There are tired-looking people all around them but it's not as busy as Dream expected.

"Do they have bathrooms here?" He asks quickly, turning to George who fidgets by his side.

"Probably. Check-in first and then we'll find one. I'll wait here."

He leaves George by a pillar near the entrance and even this feels hard. Like he's going to look back and George will have slipped out the exit. But George just shoots him a smile and a small wave, probably amused by how many times Dream's head has turned to him.

Once Dream is checked in and has been handed his boarding pass. They hunt a bathroom down together. It feels like an excuse. It is an excuse to spend a few more seconds with George before he has to go through Security. He doesn't even need the bathroom, just to splash his face with water and let it sink in that he's leaving.

They find one tucked to the side of a shuttered British Airways Information desk. It's empty, clinically clean, and lit by those fluorescent overhead lights that wash you out and make you feel a little ill after they've been shining in your eyes for too long. Dream has a feeling it's going to be a long flight home. He heads straight to the sink, pulling his little suitcase to a stop.

"What time will it be in Orlando when you land?" Dream feels like they're going in circles, George has definitely asked this question, or something similar already this morning.

"About two am, I told you that." Dream looks at his face in the mirror, the reflection of George by his side.

"Just checking. How are you getting back from the airport?"

Dream's got a headache forming, right at the centre of his forehead and George's nervous talking isn't helping anyone. Dream knows what he's doing, trying to fill the time that they have left together.

Dream has never loved someone so much and not been able to do anything about it.

"I don't know, a taxi or something." He replies, not really thinking about it.

"Okay. So will you—" He wants to shut George up for a second.

Be the person who can kiss him into silence when he's going off on a tangent. How can he not when George is looking at him like that, brown doe eyes, soft pink lips, half-buried in a hoodie. Dream is only human and a weak one at that. He wants so much. He can't even hear what George is saying anymore, words have fallen away.

Dream pulls George into a breathless, needy kiss in a public bathroom at Gatwick Airport.

There's nothing romantic about it, it's quick and desperate and it feels like the end of something. The world, the trip. Like this is the last stand and Dream is willing to die for it. He kisses George with finality. Dream has run out of time. He marches George into the line of sinks and crushes them together with a force that must surely hurt where George's ass and the back of his thighs smack against it. It's his final bow before the curtains close.

He wants to unravel George at least a little before he goes. This is what he came to London for in the first place, isn't it? This is what he's been holding back from.

How did he ever hold himself back from this?

George's mouth gasps open and Dream uses the opportunity to lick cleanly into it, his thumb rubbing against George's hip whilst the other hand cups George's jaw, sliding its way into his hair and holding him there by it. He kisses like if he doesn't he'll die. Until he can't breathe, and then he keeps on going past it.

Like sweet ambrosia heals, George meets Dream's parched lips and he is only a man. As nectar is to a butterfly, he's drawn in. George is saccharine and Dream wants to consume him. Their mouths move against each other and he hungers for more.

Dream thinks *you are the food of the gods, turn my blood to ichor and let me be cured by the taste of you.*

George is clutching at Dream's shirt and the tight hold he has on it keeps Dream firmly in place, not that he's going anywhere. George makes a wet broken sound that vibrates down Dream's spine and he inhales it hungrily.

Then George seems to snap awake with Dream moving backwards and George dishevelled, wide-eyed and staring at Dream in shock. They don't move, Dream doesn't think he physically can. He feels absolutely frozen to the spot under George's gaze. Dream remembers all at once that they're in a public bathroom at Gatwick airport. That Dream is leaving and he just indulged the selfish want he has been so purposefully ignoring.

"W-what?" George's voice trembles, "Dream? You—" He touches his lips, something sinks in Dream's stomach. He feels sick.

"I'm sorry." Dream gasps out immediately, his own voice wrecked. He's cold and hot all over. "I know it's not what you want, I'm just, I had to do that before I left. I can't keep pretending that I'm not—" He swallows the panic that rises up his throat. "I'm in love with you George. God, you don't even know how much you—"

George is just looking at him in wide-eyed astonishment. His mouth catches on the start of a word or sentence - but he just looks lost.

"Don't say anything please." Dream tells him quickly. He can't bear it. "This is hard enough. I'm sorry, I could have done so much better for you." He pulls at his hair.

"Dream, no you..." George's voice is a whisper and it falls off. He's struck speechless. Dream doesn't want to think about what that tone means. George doesn't say anything else and that feels worse than anything, than a fuck you, or an outright no. George whispers his name and it feels like they're stood parallel in St Paul's Cathedral on opposite sides of a circular room. This is the truth that Dream doesn't want to accept and it's unavoidable now. He'd done so well to steer clear of being here and now look at what he's gone and done. Ruined by his recklessness.

"I'm sorry." He stutters out again.

Dream likes to think of himself as a fighter. That he stands his ground and gives as much as he gets but right now he wants to run away as fast as he can. Away from George and the hurt and all the love that weighs down his heart. So he does. He grabs his jacket and suitcase and runs away, blending in with the crowds of travellers and pushing through to Security. He leaves George in an empty airport bathroom. Feeling relieved and distraught, his heart growing heavier the further away he gets.

JIM: *You can wake up now, the universe has ended.*

— *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955)

George stands still for far too long. Blinking at the empty air that Dream has left behind. He can still feel Dream's mouth against his, warm and perfect, too much and not enough.

He switches to angry confusion seconds later. *What the fuck?* Dream just kissed him and bounced. Like that. Leaving George alone to deal with the aftermath, before he can even begin to comprehend it.

Beelining it out of the bathroom, George's eyes scan the Departure's building. But if Dream is anywhere, he evades George's vision. He must have already moved on to the Security desk, where George can't follow.

It's too loud inside to think or breathe and he has no hope of finding Dream here now. He moves to the exit. It's freezing outside, but he perseveres. Standing in an alcove to the right of the doors. George shivers. When he breathes out the air is visible, he thinks of flour clouds in the kitchen and Dream's hand on his arm in stark white.

Pulling his phone from his pocket George calls Dream. He doesn't even know what he wants to say yet, he just needs to get that dumb idiot to stand still for a minute. To explain, to let George tell him that it's okay.

"*Answer.*" He mutters to the endless ring coming from his phone. Eventually, it rolls to voicemail. George hangs up. He pulls his sweater over his hands like it will conceal the white-knuckle clench of his fists. Maybe it is the cold that seizes him but it's certainly not the cold that has his heart-racing, his chest-aching.

Though this feeling, he thinks, is cold too.

He calls Sapnap next, a natural progression.

"George! Dude, I just fucking killed this game. You have gotta get on CS with me right now. I am popping off!" His tone is enthusiastically loud.

"I um.. Sapnap. Dream. He.. Dream's gone and—"

There's a clattering sound, then Sapnap's voice is clearer than before in his ear. "Are you okay? Where are you? Did he just leave?"

"Just gone, I'm at the airport. He kissed me and then he left and I—" George's breathing hiccups, choking on the words.

"*What!*" It's loud in a way only Sapnap can be. "George am I hallucinating? Are you hallucinating? He kissed you?"

"In the airport bathroom. Then he left." He repeats again, as though he can make more sense of this situation the more times he says it out loud.

"In an airport bathroom? Ew, do I need to call him and tell him that is so not hot? You deserve so

much better than an airport bathroom Georgie." Sapnap is either missing the point or being purposefully imperceptive.

"You're not freaking out?" George shoves his free hand into the pocket of his hoodie.

"No. Are you?"

"*You know*. Did Dream tell you? What did he tell you?"

Ignoring the question, Sapnap sighs. "So you finally figured it out. It only took you forever dude."

"He kissed me Sapnap, I think that made it pretty clear." George snaps.

"Dude, how have you been this oblivious that it took him kissing you to figure it out?"

"I don't know, how didn't I see it? How didn't I realize I loved him." The words spill out into the open, seized by the crisp morning air.

"Oh, so we're using the big words."

"I knew I loved him. I've always loved him. I think it— I think it changed. It's always been friend love, like for you—"

"Aw George! You love me?" Sapnap interrupts.

"Shut up, I'm trying to talk about something for once, and you just." George sighs, frustrated but mainly at himself and at everything that's happened. At Dream for leaving instead of facing this, where they could come to some logical conclusion.

"Sorry, sorry. Go on dude."

"I thought it was just like.. friend love and I guess I didn't want to think about it being anything different. Shit. I don't know how this has happened. I don't get what's changed."

"Time, circumstance. The two of you have changed, like, so much. You were way more annoying before." Before means YouTube, a couple of years ago when he was eighteen but acted more like the sixteen-year-olds he was friends with. They've all grown up.

"I— I don't know what to do. I don't know what I'm doing!" George closes his eyes for a hot second, there are definitely tears forming and he is not going to let himself cry over this.

"Me either dude. I don't think I've got good advice for you if that's what you want."

George sniffs. "I just needed to say this, to someone. To you. Because you know Dream and me and Dream's gone. He kissed me and told me... He ran away and got on his flight."

"Fuck. He is so... I will kill him. He is such a dumb little bitch." Sapnap gets louder as he speaks and George can't help but smile a little.

"He really is."

"You should fly over and just come see me. Make him jealous. I'll show you a good time Georgie."

"Shut the- you're such a nimrod. Shut up."

"I'm, like, almost fully serious!"

"I could do it though, I could fly to Orlando or, or—"

"No, this is getting too close to romcom level cringe dude, I hate that." Sapnap groans.

"Not like, in a cringe way. Just.. we both know Dream."

"We're the three most stubborn assholes in the world aren't we?" George assumes it's rhetorical, the answer is a clear yes. "You do whatever you think is best, I'll always be here waiting for the two of you to sort your shit out so we can go back to playing video games and not stressing about dumb shit like.. feelings ew."

"It has been so dumb."

"Go home George, we'll figure something. I'll talk to Dream once he's landed if you want?"

"Don't. Not yet. Just, give me time to sort it out myself. If I want you to say something to him, I'll tell you I promise, okay?"

"Sure. Love you dude, take care of yourself."

"I will, love you too idiot."

Sapnap makes a loud kissy noise, it cuts off as the phone hangs up. George sighs, feeling... feeling too much to put into words.

George has the complete realisation that the entire length of Dream's stay in London he has reassured himself that he has time to figure things out.

And before his own eyes, his time has run out.

Chapter End Notes

chapter song — one more weekend by maude latour

for you

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Dream is a dick (self-appointed, world-renowned). The plane is giving him too much room to think, to regret, and to torture himself. He's got a middle seat, squished awkwardly between two strangers and he dares not move too much, doesn't know which armrest is his to use. It's a nine-hour long flight home and his chair is already uncomfortable and— he can't believe he kissed George in an airport bathroom and left him there.

His head is pounding. George's face cupped in the palm of his hand, pressed close and— the stewardess interrupts asking if he wants any refreshments. He pays way too much for a bottle of water, then shoves his earbuds in and turns his music all the way up. Dream's overflowing confession races through his mind. He is no fighter at all. He's a coward who spilt his guts and ran away because it got too much.

The woman with the window seat just pulled a tuna sandwich out of her bag, bought from the Boots that was in Duty-Free at the airport. He reaches for his own backpack, tucked under the seat in front of him, where inside Dream knows is George's stolen copy of Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy. There are the markings of those dog-eared pages that George had never bothered to straighten out, it feels like a sacred thing, he feels unworthy of touching it. Dream opens it anyway and makes an attempt to read, hoping to get lost in— *The house stood on a slight rise just on the edge of the village. It stood on its own and looked out over a broad spread of West Country farmland. Not a remarkable house by any means—* What is wrong with him, why did he even do that? He can't stop thinking about the shell shock on George's face, his lips parted, his face a picture of confusion.

Dream closes the book and sets it on his lap. There is little option in terms of distraction. He attempts a remedy for his panicked mind by turning to his phone, there aren't many choices with it on flight mode. Ranboo had sent over some ideas for the SMP plot yesterday and Dream had copy-pasted them to his Notes to read later. But no, he doesn't feel much like working on that plot right now. He opens a blank document instead and starts writing something new, hunched over the keypad of his phone. It's not ideal and he wishes his laptop wasn't in his suitcase because it would be much easier with that. But for a short while, carefully typing on his phone is a worthy distraction.

THE DREAM SMP
'BEGINNING OF THE END ARC'

CHAPTER 12 - FOR YOU

INT. It's a poorly constructed shack of a building. Held together by pure luck and obvious haphazard repair. The edges of the room are fuzzy, the blocks they're made of not quite settled in place. And the view outside, well, there is nothing out there. Just the empty place. It's best not to focus on that. The light coming in through the large, wall-spanning windows emanates from an unknown source, but it filters the room a warm, grainy shade of nostalgia. This space is warm and it is well-known, the strange flooring has been walked over by countless feet, the spiralling staircase that stands in the middle of the space is well worn, each pale wooden step has been worn down into grooves. The wood of the handrail has been gripped and touched so many times that it is polished into a shine by simple wear.

There is history to this place and there are no people more aware than the two lone figures that stand inside it.

Enter *GEORGE* and *DREAM*. Our hero and our villain.

They both know this place all too well. They're the ones who built it after all.

GEORGE: How did we get here?

DREAM: I don't know. Does it matter?

GEORGE: No, I suppose not.

It's simple really, here is a place where nothing else matters. Time stands still, dust particles in the air sparkle like glitter.

And if you can imagine as though you're a child once more, with wonder and honest awe you can picture that simple dust as fairies dancing for you in the sunlight.

GEORGE: It feels like we haven't spoken in ages.

Ages, as though nations have risen and fallen in less time.

DREAM: We speak every day, George. It's probably only been a couple of hours at most.

George shifts his weight and the floor under him groans.

GEORGE: I guess so.

Dream watches him turn in a circle, eyes scanning the room and getting caught every once in a

while on the material things that fill it. He leans against the staircase, just observing the movement.

GEORGE: (voice quiet) Strange.

DREAM: What is it?

GEORGE: I don't know. Wasn't there a door here before?

George gestures with the tilt of his head to a wall that is a window but maybe once had a door. Something is happening, the walls are moving but nothing changes and though he squints at them, it doesn't make any more sense to him.

It's Dream's turn to fall silent, he returns George's stare but says nothing else. Equally as lost as George is.

GEORGE: (cont.) I guess not.

Then, George moves to where a door feasibly could once have been, but for some reason, he can't quite reach it. The room isn't that big and he knows that it should only take three steps forward to reach the wall without a door. But he takes those steps and is no closer than before. Strange indeed.

DREAM: You should stay here. With me.

Dream is settled now on the stairs, sat with his legs planted firmly on one of the steps below him. He doesn't seem bothered by the moving walls or the missing doors, he's too busy looking at George to notice.

GEORGE: I'm not going anywhere. Where would I go without you?

They watch each other's stillness for a beat.

DREAM: Nowhere.

There's a shared smile between them, full of secrets and memory. As weighted as a quick flash of teeth and quirked lips can be.

DREAM: (cont.) If I went somewhere without you, there'd be something seriously wrong.

George snorts at the sincerity behind those words.

GEORGE: I like it here.

He's looking inwards, around the room again, up at the ceiling and then the chests full of things they haven't looked at in forever.

DREAM: George, will you come over here?

But George has stopped to open up an unlocked chest and is staring at whatever happens to be inside. There's something of substance in there, and he smiles as though he remembers what it is. But he can't quite picture the thing in the chest in his head or why it would evoke such a sensation of nostalgia.

GEORGE: Does something feel wrong to you? Are we missing someone or something?

The words fall out of his mouth, the room tilts sideways but they're glued to their spot, nothing

falls, nothing breaks, nothing moves. Apart from the dust dancing and their chests expanding and deflating as they breathe, but the room is definitely sideways.

DREAM: Sapnap's not here.

The room straightens out again.

GEORGE: Oh, that must be it.

George steps towards Dream and his face changes as he notices something unusual.

GEORGE: You're not wearing your mask?

DREAM: Not with you. Do you want me to?

Dream's looking at him, eyes wide and George knows if he said so Dream would put the mask back on right away. The room creaks with this knowledge, like old buildings do.

GEORGE: Of course not. Never with me.

This is where there is confession.

Something shifts in the room that is a home, but not really and Dream is standing in front of George and he tells him he loves him and the room isn't quite real, but the light coming in through the windows is getting brighter and the words come out of Dream's mouth in perfect order.

And this time, George says I love you back.

EXEUNT.

There are seven hours and forty-six minutes left of his flight and Dream has no clue how he is going to fill them.

SAPNAP

are u back yet?

DREAM

Just landed, give me an hour or two to get home and I can call you?

SAPNAP

no biggie

His mom picks him up from Orlando International Airport. Taking one look at him and whatever expression must sit on his face, she draws him into a squeezing hug. It's two am and he's thankful she said she would pick him up, despite the late hour. He's missed her so much and she has missed him enough to come get him when she could be sleeping.

It's easier to hold in the urge to have a breakdown when he knows she will be there to bear witness.

"Mom, I can't breathe."

"I've missed you so so much." She gives him one final, oxygen-depriving squeeze and kisses him firmly on the forehead.

"I missed you." He tells her, only minutely embarrassed that he's a 21-year-old man being hugged to death by his mother. She pulls back, looking at him carefully. His mom is a tall woman with blonde hair that is much lighter than his. She's almost eye-level with Dream, but under her green-eyed gaze, he feels smaller. Like he's shrinking back into the obnoxious kid he used to be.

"What's up? How was the trip?" She's a calculated sort of casual and he knows she has filed away whatever she sees in his expression, to use later.

"It was good, great even." He manages a genuine smile, it was more than great. Apart from just that little thing, right at the end.

"And how's George? He okay?"

She must see the way his face drops, his eyes dart away then back to her face.

"Yeah, he-, he's good. It's all good."

"Clay." Her tone is a wary question, testing the waters of the conversation.

"Mom, it's fine, I promise. I'll show you some photos we took later, okay?"

"Sure... I'm happy to have you home." She squeezes his hand and let's go carefully. He trails her back to the car. She doesn't bring anything up on the way to his apartment and he's thankful. But he knows at some point she's going to expect a conversation.

It's strange being back here, with the new knowledge of how different it is from London. They pass the giant billboards that line the interstate and it's so American, it's a startling culture shock. They don't have highways like this in London, they don't have humidity like this in London. Even the way the light of the early morning hits the road as they drive is different. His sense of place, of home, has been disrupted. Dream doesn't know if he quite belongs in either. Part of him is still in that small London flat in the middle of the city. And the part of him that he left behind here is unrecognizable to the Dream that now returns. He feels too warm, a layer of sweat on his skin, but the air conditioning is already blasting in the car. He stays quiet as his mom talks his ear off about his little sister and his dad and how everyone else is doing, Dream listens absently to the American voice on the radio introducing the next song.

↳ we never went to brighton. we never stood on the beach and maybe i've messed up our only chance of seeing a sunset together.

His house is too warm, left stagnant for long enough that the outside air has seeped in and made it unbearably hot. His mom leaves him on the doorstep. "You're going to be alright? I'll come back later today and bring you Patches."

"I'll be fine, I'm probably going to go sleep for a couple of hours, so don't worry about rushing back. You should get some sleep yourself."

"I will. Make sure you do." She gives him a stern look.

He nods.

"I love you, Clay."

"Love you too."

She walks back down the driveway to the car, giving him a final wave before she's off. He closes the door. It's startlingly quiet inside and the heat is almost unbearable. Dream turns the air conditioning on straight away. He leaves his bags by the door and walks around this strange space like a tourist just visiting - careful and curious.

In the kitchen, he pulls open the fridge. There's a pint of off-milk he didn't plan for when he left on such short notice, as well as other perishables that are distinctly *gross*. The smell is unpleasant. He closes the fridge, quickly deciding it will be something he deals with later.

His kitchen is so different from George's, bigger and echoing, there isn't the noise from the television or the sound of road traffic outside. There is an actual upstairs and downstairs to this

place and too many rooms. Dream didn't realize that he hates how many rooms his house has.

He doesn't bother with switching any lights on, moving around like a ghost in the dark. Haunting his own hallways. From room to room he goes, pulling off his jacket and dropping it on the floor of the stairs. He reaches the upstairs landing and staggers down the hallway. The floorboards don't make noise underfoot like those in George's old apartment.

He finds himself on the floor of his bedroom. It feels like an out of body experience. Dream lays there, draws his hands to his face, fingertips pressed to his eyes, palms flattening against his cheeks. He sighs out all that has built up in his chest. Or tries to, it's lodged in his throat and threatening to spill over. His arms fall away from his face and Dream is staring at the plain darkness of his ceiling.

dream @dreamwastaken

Back stateside! Planning some streams in the near future. Video's not scheduled until I'm settled in properly. Sorry that I've been a bit more absent than usual, I've missed you guys! How have you all been?

7.1k REPLIES / 7.3k RTS / 157k LIKES

"When'd you get in?" He calls Sapnap while sitting in his computer chair. Phone on speaker as he boots up his PC for the first time in weeks. There's a line of bottles on his desk, all of them empty or almost there.

"Not long ago, mom dropped me off. She's gone home now to get some sleep."

"Nice of her to pick you up." Sapnap's tone is off and Dream doesn't like it. His computer whirrs at him loudly.

"Shouldn't you be sleeping? It's like three am for you." Dream asks.

"I should be sleeping. But there are bigger fish to fry than being asleep right now." That tone is too knowing.

"Yeah, it uh— have you spoken to George?" Dream surprises himself by being the first to rip the bandaid off.

The line falls quiet.

"Nick.." Dream urges.

"You're a fucking dumb idiot." Dream's eyes widen. "I mean first of all an airport bathroom? Come on—"

"I was, I didn't think—"

He's cut off by Sapnap. "Clearly! What is wrong with you?"

The bright light of Dream's home screen wallpaper flashes onto his monitors. It shocks him - it's someone's fanart of the three of them. George, Sapnap and him laughing together, their arms around one another's shoulders. Dream in the middle with George on his left and Sapnap on his right. He fixates on the image, vision blurring. This Dream is looking at George, who is drawn tilted in laughter, eyes squinted shut, his clout goggles stuck in his hair. This Dream with a green hoodie and mask on his head has no care in the world and his best friends in his arms.

"Dream?"

He blinks the brightness from his eyes, coming back to the conversation. "I— I panicked, I couldn't. I should have just faced the consequences, I know that. God, he hates me doesn't he?"

"Okay, I thought George was oblivious and I knew you were a dumbass but seriously Dream. If you think George hates you, you don't deserve his love."

The impact of this scuffed audio sentence from Dream's iPhone speakers sends him careening. He has to grip his own thigh with his hand to ground himself. "What. He..?"

"It doesn't take rocket science to figure that out. You're too wrapped up in your own angsty bullshit

to actually see what is right in front of you. You left him Dream." The words puncture him. Sapnap is calm when Dream feels deserving of so much worse.

"I know." He's breathless.

"Did you even give him a moment to collect his thoughts after you ambushed him?"

"I.. No. I just. I was being selfish and impulsive and I just, I thought if I didn't kiss him it would ruin me, and if I did... Oh, God. It's ruined me anyway hasn't it?" Everything would have been fine. if he'd given it more time and if his thoughts hadn't been so centred on saving himself from the rejection he had expected. George loves him and Dream ran. He thinks of his hastily written script on the plane, he could have had that. He could have had it all.

"*Stop*, stop it Dream. It hasn't ruined anything, you've just made this whole thing so much harder for yourself." Sapnap pulls him back from his spiral, to reality and Dream scrambles.

"I need to say sorry, I need to tell him, I'll call him—"

"No. You need to let him talk to you. No more rushing in and doing impulsive shit without thinking about the consequences." Sapnap reaffirms and Dream doesn't think he's ever heard this tone directed so seriously at him before.

"He'll talk to me? Do I wait? When will he talk to me?"

"Just, *dude*. Give him a little time. He's figuring it out. Go unpack or like go to sleep or something."

"Will you make sure he's okay? I don't know how to fix this."

"Of course I'll make sure. No one is asking you to fix anything, idiot. I think it's best if you just take some time for yourself."

"I know, I— I will."

"I'll speak to you soon, peace dude."

"Bye."

Sapnap hangs up. Dream stands shakily, looking around his room. There's a pile of clothes spilling out of his wardrobe, another result of his rush to leave for London. He doesn't have the energy to start tidying now.

↳ our conversation that night, you in the kitchen and then the hallway. i was pushing you for answers and you wouldn't give in. did you know then? in your dream, you said you were reaching out for me. and i still don't know where to put that. i knew there was something wrong. you asked me to leave and so i did, but that's not what you really wanted, is it? how did i not see you?

In Orlando, it rains. Not monsoon-heavy, but vicious still. Invoking the typical confused glee of tourists and nonchalant shrug of native Floridians. When the rain starts pouring Dream stands still, a plastic Walmart bag and a crate of bottled waters in his hands. People pass around him, some kids stand under a nearby bus shelter and Dream has to swallow sharply.

Rain and skin meet as water seeps through his clothes to the bare skin of his shoulders. He barely contains a shiver. The touch an unexpected comfort. He lets it drench him.

Water falling down his forehead, touch tender. It travels further over fluttering eyelids and reddened cheeks. Dancing as it trails over the tip of his nose, moistening his chapped lips with its feather-touch. He lets it drench him.

Hoping that it fills him up. Hoping that the rain stops and he is left dripping. That at least this water will stay with him.

George in the rain is a sight to behold, charmingly bemused, so real and so alive. Dream recalls it clearly. He can almost reach out and touch the image in his mind. Water flattening his brown hair, it made him look slightly drowned and goofy. In sharply focused memory, it occupies Dream's mind now. It has been impossible to look away. He remembers all too well. George's brown eyes shining under the oily illumination of London streetlights and the fading glow of the dying sun.

This rain is some sort of punishment, heaven-sent, someone up there is laughing at him for sure.

The rain in Florida is nothing like the rain in London.

A long time tradition in Dream's household, started by his mom and his older sister but almost always including him is watching dumb chick-flicks when someone is feeling sad. Started long ago, when his sister was still a teenager and got her heartbroken for the first but not the last time. He's a good brother, so he had offered his support and it turned out rom-coms aren't as terrible as he expected.

He has a soft spot for films like *Clueless* and *13 Going On 30*. Reserved for spending time with his family, of course, we can just ignore that one time he watched *The Devil Wears Prada* home alone and cried at the end when Andy throws her phone in the fountain and leaves Meryl Streep in Paris. Deciding that the path she was headed down isn't the one she wants. Taking destiny into her own hands. All this to say his mom sees him to return Patches and she is insistent on sticking around his apartment.

Her motherly instinct had kicked in since the moment she picked him up from the airport. Dream puts his best face on, but it's not enough to dissuade her.

"Mom, I'm fine, honestly."

"I'm not a dummy. You don't have to tell me something is wrong for me to just know."

"I am fine. I had a great time in London, I was ready to come back is all. I missed you."

"You are not playing that card, though it does make me want to squeeze you again."

She does. Dream doesn't bother protesting. They watch *When Harry Met Sally* and Dream thinks his mom might somehow see inside his mind.

He pretends he's not crying at Harry's outburst in Jess and Marie's new house about a coffee table that's really about his failed marriage. Or when Harry and Sally are watching *Casablanca* together over the phone talking about their shitty old relationships and moving on and Harry just *knowing* Sally and being the last person either of them wants to talk to before going to sleep at night. He's totally not emotional as he watches them dating everyone but each other. Or Sally's blunt "*Harry, I can't do this anymore. I am not your consolation prize.*" Or them finally figuring it out in the end but taking so long to get there you have to wonder, how didn't they figure this out sooner? It was right in front of them the whole time.

His mom notices him, pulls him close. He tells her everything in a breathless outburst of speech and she tells him too kindly that he has messed up, that she loves him and that everything turns out alright in the end.

"How can you know that?"

"Years of experience. Nothing is ever set in stone." She's so matter of fact about it.

"Even this film, in the first draft, Harry and Sally didn't get together in the end. Did you know that? Imagine how different the world would be if someone didn't have the change of heart. To give in to love and rewrite that last scene. You messed up sweetie, but this is your best friend and he loves you and he just needs time to figure this out. And I think that you need to take some time too."

↳ I've been thinking about love in film.

Of love and being in love. and I imagine it like an old film reel, little snapshot scenes of b-roll footage: hands entwined, bodies close, hair and skin and warmth. You and me. And from these intricate scenes of intimacy, I see myself in love and being embraced by it.

There's an artificial coldness to reality. Sitting alone in my air-conditioned room is making me feel shaky, my skin tight and itchy. But there's calm chaos it brings too. A messy room and I'm wide awake despite my tired eyes and these sleepless, restless nights.

And, god, I'm not asking to be a star in this film. Just a character in it. Who went on the journey, survived all three acts and came out the other end with something to show for it. A little character development, a cool new scar, just some morsel of understanding life and why I can't seem to get love right.

I think the problem is me. That when I auditioned for this role, in this story of you and I, that I expected more speaking lines or a bigger role than the one I landed. As though getting to be best friends with you wasn't enough. You know what they say about actors and their egos. And so I won't settle for this part I've been given.

I just want a moment, I'd settle for a deleted scene. For someone to change the script or call for a reshoot. To be more than some future video essay on YouTube about why these two characters were actually in love the whole time if you look at the subtext and how the writers were too much of cowards to actually commit to it. So that I can finally be one of these faceless film people and have you to touch and hold. To kiss and cherish. I've messed that up for us.

I hope the movie gets a sequel.

Instead of lying on his bed, watching the shadows dance with the spinning of his ceiling fan, Dream decides to stream. He messages Sapnap, telling him to join if he so chooses. Then starts up a stream with the intention of speedrunning, just for fun. Which he reminds the chat repeatedly before he begins.

It's almost too easy, slipping back into this comfortable skin of streamer, YouTuber. You don't have to think about things that are personal and with his donations turned off, Dream doesn't even have to worry about anyone bringing things up that he doesn't want to talk about.

There's this new thankfulness he has in the fact he's never face revealed. There are no expectations for him to have a facecam on, recording his every reaction and expression.

Sapnap joins thirty minutes in, less than a minute after Dream ends a good run early by falling into lava. Thrown mid-jump by a stray blaze's fireball.

"You're bad at the game." Is the first thing he says.

"Hello to you too." Dream snorts.

"You're so bad. This is what happens when you don't have hack clients to help you I guess."

"Stop." Dream can't help but laugh in surprise. "You came here just to say that?"

"Nah I'm gonna stick around, bully you some more."

They're joined by Bad not long after, who always has things to talk about. Dream doesn't know what Bad knows, but he doesn't bring anything up. Not that Dream thinks Bad would ever bring up anything personal on stream.

Bad ends up reading questions from chat out while Dream keeps running. He realizes how much he's missed this - spending time with friends on stream and interacting with his community is so underrated.

Then, Dream gets a notification on his phone, he checks it absentmindedly. George has posted a photo on Instagram. Clicking without thinking, he's faced with the image of George's cat on his bed, his hand in her fur. Long fingers, disappearing into the soft density, a red sleeve cutting off the skin at George's thin wrist. Dream's own palms are too warm. He scrolls down quickly, it's captioned 'Cat.' and Dream can't help but snort - he can't believe George still hasn't told their fans her name yet. That's the thing about George, he is so dedicatedly private about everything. Dream knows too well how impossible it can seem to get information out of him. His face falls a little. He misses London, misses George's quiet reflections late at night.

There's a memory of Dream with a toothbrush stuck in his mouth, leaving the bathroom to stand with George in the kitchen as he waits for the kettle to boil for a cup of tea. In his memory, he can't quite remember where he stands, if it was against the counter or next to the fridge. But that's unimportant.

"I miss living at home sometimes." George had said and Dream thinks the kettle was at the bubbling point of boiling. The light just clicking off to inform them that it had finished heating up. He's unsure of what was going on with the kettle because Dream could do nothing more than give George a questioning eyebrow raise, toothbrush obstructing him from talking.

"It's dumb. I used to spend all day in my room on Minecraft with you. But every night I would go downstairs at about ten o'clock and get a cup of tea and biscuits. My mum and dad would usually be in the living room and you had to walk through there to get to the kitchen. It's stupid, but if they were still up I'd make them cups too and sit with them for like ten minutes just talking about, like, coding and you and Sapnap. Before saying I was going upstairs to bed. And then actually staying up until three am."

Dream knows he tried speaking but it had come out gargled by minty foam. George had laughed at him while he'd spit into the kitchen sink. "I didn't know that. That's, it's nice." Dream had managed eventually, toothbrush clutched in his hand. George had shrugged and Dream must have looked starstruck by this little scrap George had offered him.

How do I get back? He thinks.

You don't. Is the answer. Their time together was as fleeting as it is memorable. Dream's carrying it with him in the lint that fills his pockets and the mud that sticks to the bottom of his shoes.

It's getting further and further away the more time he spends thinking about London. In the seconds

between then and now he has lost something. A dust speck really, nothing in the grand scheme of life. But here, in between the litter that lines the bottom of the backpack he carried with him to London and back, there are tiny recollections of memory that sustain him.

He knows something of himself has fallen to the ground, like a spare cent, that he is changing with all he loses and picks up. London is gone and though a one-pound coin sits in his pocket now, inevitably it will be lost to time.

He hopes that whatever is coming doesn't make him want to clean out his pockets completely.

"Oh my God!" Sapnap's screech makes Dream look up sharply. Minecraft is still open on his monitor and Dream is too late - *You Died!* flashes across the screen.

"Ah! What even happened?" He drops his phone onto his desk.

"What are you doing, Dream? You just stood still and a freaking zombie spawned and killed you!"

"I looked away for a second!" Dream flails a little, the shock of Sapnap's yell has his heart hammering.

"Dude it's been like a minute!"

Bad is laughing at him loudly, he thinks he hears the words 'doofus' and 'muffin' in between the gasps for air.

"Sorry, sorry. I was texting someone." His hands go back to his keyboard and mouse and Dream exits to the menu, clicking to create a new world. "Sorry chat, let's name this world something for good luck this time."

"Name it Sapnap."

"No, then I'd have the worst luck, duh."

"Ooo, George just posted a picture on Instagram guys!" Bad says and Dream sighs. This stream hasn't distracted him as effectively as he expected it to.

It's weighing on his mind, a constant presence. A stream of consciousness '*you fucked up, you fucked up*', turning like a carousel befit with shining lights and brightly painted horses, galloping and twirling in gaudy technicolour. Impossible to ignore. The guilt, the embarrassment. Thinking how if only he had stood a few seconds more. No, if only he had gone about it completely different. Taken his time and told George. If only he could go back to the beginning of his trip and they could have had the time together to figure it out. He's left George on another continent - shoved a backpack full of emotion at him like "*here, have this*" and then ran on his merry way. Dream can hear the fairground music that serves as the backing track to his own voice, '*you fucked up, you fucked up*.'

Chapter End Notes

chapter song — for you by willie j healey

got to admit i was cackling a little when i wrote dream's fanfiction-y attempt at rewriting his confession. like this thinly veiled excuse that it is somehow smp plot PLEASE. dream is so dramatic here and i'm very happy about it.

this is a very,, fragmented. i know it's a lot of different styles packed into one but i think that suits the mess dream is in pretty well :)

is there a place i can go

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"What have I missed?" Quackity asks when he joins the call and despite everything, George's heart leaps for the split second he thinks it's Dream who has connected. But there's been radio silence between them for the past day.

George thinks he has Sapnap to thank for that.

"A lot." George begins. "I'm planning on going to Florida," he tells them all for the first time.

To Quackity, and to Sapnap and Karl who were already in the call discussing the next Tales From The SMP stream of the distant future.

It's the first time he's said this plan he has out loud. It's no longer a thought swimming around in his head, it's real and conceptualised and right in front of him.

"Yo, have you and Dream not spent enough time together? I'm starting to get jealous." Karl starts.

"Exactly Karl, this is totally unfair, when are you going to visit us?" Quackity continues.

George flounders, settling on just staying quiet until Sapnap speaks up. "Guys, just leave it." He brings it to an end, tone stern.

"Why? What's going on?"

"George?"

Their voices immediately switch from the usual lilt of joking sarcasm to genuine concern.

George knows he's the one who brought it up. But he prickles. The idea of being so open suddenly daunting and impossible. "It's nothing."

Then: "Sapnap you tell them."

"*Me*? What do you want me to say?"

It's fine saying that he's going to Florida because they'll find that much out anyway. But having to explain himself, let them into his thoughts and feelings. It's much harder than he dares consider. He'd rather someone else do it for him.

"I don't know." George falters. "Whatever. It doesn't even matter." The room is too small and his bed is still unmade, there's a pair of socks that aren't his at the corner of his room mixed in with his own laundry. Even Dream's scent lingers, on the pillow next to George's. "I'm going to see Dream, just because I feel like it. That's all you're getting."

"No, no, no. Now we definitely want to know. Sapnap knows. Unfair." Karl whines, pawing at this mystery now he's picked up the scent of it.

"Yeah, cause George likes me better than he likes both of you." Sapnap teases, clearly trying to

move them all on.

"So not true." Karl rebuts.

Quackity scoffs at the insinuation. "Liar, you're full of it. George tell them you love me the most."

"I hate all of you." George groans.

"No! They're dimwits, am I right? That's why I'm your clear favourite." Karl panders and George wonders if he can get something out of this if he pits them all against each other for favouritism and bragging rights.

It would probably wind up being self-imposed hell if he did try.

"Karl— okay, whatever."

"So you admit I'm your favourite?"

"No, I'm not saying that. None of you are my favourite." George rubs his temple, anticipating a headache.

"Dream is, clearly, that's why you're visiting him and not us." They're trying to guilt him into spilling, which definitely won't work.

"Tell us, George."

"I'm not saying anything."

They start a rolling cry of, "*Let me in!*" - it gets too annoying to bear for any longer. George may not give in to guilt-tripping, but straight up giving him a headache in real-time is another story.

"Fine! Sapnap, just tell them." George concedes.

"Me? Okay sure." He takes a few seconds to pick the right words and order them into a neat little sentence. "Basically, George is in love with Dream, Dream is in love with George. Dream kissed George in the airport then ran his ass back to Florida like the little wimp he is."

George's face burns, he would never have even been able to get through explaining it that efficiently without awkwardly stuttering and dancing around the situation.

There's a simultaneous "*What?!*" from Karl and Alex.

The uproar is unanimously extreme, it's deafening.

"George? But, you guys, *You and Dream?* Hello? How did we not know about this?" Karl muddles through his half-formed questions.

"Holy shit. I think I'm hallucinating. This cannot be real." Alex laughs nervously.

George hates them. He loves them completely (he'd never admit this of course) but he hates them so so much.

"Guys, you're being dicks." It's Sapnap who is being reasonable here, *Sapnap*.

"I hate this. This is the worst conversation of my life. Yes, it's real." George confirms, voice shaky. He feels light-headed, he needs something to do with his hands.

"Okay. okay. I'm coming back to earth, I'm thinking. It's processing." Karl blunders on.

"But like, the memes? All of the memes George? And this entire time?" Quackity is in clear shock.

"No! I didn't even. I didn't realize until, like, three days ago."

"And Dream?" Karl asks. George doesn't have an answer for that one. He has no idea about what Dream's thinking, of what he's doing right now on the other side of the Atlantic.

Sapnap is the one who has the answer. "Oh, a lot longer than three days ago that's for sure."

George sits back in his chair carefully, God. *If he knew*. Things could be so much different. They've wasted so much time. "Do you know how long?" The words leave his mouth and he's desperate for answers.

"Dunno. He doesn't exactly talk about it. Like a year, I guess? Maybe longer."

There's something heavy holding his heart, wrapped around it in knots and twists, pulling him down. George sinks in his chair.

"What the hell." Quackity voices a thought lifted directly from George's mind.

"He kissed you, George?" Karl asks, genuine bewilderment in his tone like he too is still fitting together these pieces along with George. He can't put himself in his friend's shoes and imagine what they must think of this. Probably that George and Dream are absolutely fucking dumb. Which George can't disagree with.

"He's a little pussy."

"*Sapnap*." George defends quickly.

"What George? He ran away, what do you want me to say?" Sapnap stubbornly replies.

"Nothing maybe?" George is thankful and he agrees for the most part with Sapnap's sentiment. Dream is a little pussy. But George thinks he understands somewhat the volatile enigma that is Dream's mind. What would he have done, if the tables were turned?

Well, to be fair, he probably wouldn't have kissed Dream in a bathroom.

He's barely unspooled this love, the loose thread spills from his chest, into his hands, tangled and daunting. He didn't run. He stood his ground and though he knows he has no answers to the question Dream had urgently pressed against his lips. George wishes he'd reached out, stopped Dream in his tracks before this mess could grow any bigger. They're unbearably out of control now and George is determined to fix it.

"Just calling him what he is." He hears Sapnap mutter.

"Wait, wait." Karl interrupts. "So why are you going to Orlando?"

"Because I want to talk to him properly." In the hours since Dream left him, it's all he's thought about. He knows what he needs to do next and he's planning for it with more consideration than Dream ever gave him. "I need to think about what I want to say and I don't want to do it on the phone."

"This is so cute, you're farming aw's from me, George." Karl giggles and he's thankful these are his friends despite the way they get on his nerves most of the time. Who else could he talk with until

six am? Or make dumb song parodies with and have files of ugly photos of each other just because it's funny?

They hear Quackity sigh. "Man, I still can't believe we knew nothing about this."

"Wait?" Karl gasps sharply, "You guys were sharing a bed this entire time! Oh my god, it's so obvious now. George are you sure you only figured this out three days ago?"

"Shut up. I was oblivious okay." George brings his hands to his face even though no one can see him turn red in embarrassment. Karl is cackling in genuine surprise as he finally connects the dots.

"They what? They shared a bed?" Quackity yells, George winces. "Why am I the last to know this shit! Did you know Sapnap?"

Sapnap laughs loudly at them. "I knew before both of you."

"What the fuck is going on? I think I'm in shock."

"Yeah, me too," George replies quietly.

He sees Dream's tweet on his timeline and he doesn't think much of it at first.

Can brush it off by scrolling past it and liking a few dumb memes and some of Karl's replies to celebrities asking to play Minecraft. But then in the same way as soon as he notices how easy it was to scroll past it without reading, it's all he can think about.

He goes to Dream's second Twitter, reads it closely and it's so typically Dream. He's always thinking about work and content somewhere at the back of his mind, is probably trying to slip quietly back into it.

George doesn't do more than sit at his PC to appear on other peoples streams, convinced into a GTA stream with Quackity and then him and Ponk cause chaos on the SMP for old times sake and because he's been neglecting that friendship for a little longer than he's comfortable admitting. He plays CSGO with Sapnap on his alt Twitch and snorts at the memory of a much younger him screaming his head off at the game, he still screams now but that's unimportant. He's had character development in other ways that negate the screaming.

And it must look like he's not thinking about Dream at all in this time. Off having a laugh with his mates for hours on end. But Dream is a constant and he's as big of a presence in his absence as when he's there.

Soon, George thinks. He's booked the flight to Orlando and he knows what he's going to say to Dream when he gets there. It's just a waiting game now until he can fly out.

So he sits at his PC on other peoples streams, because the *Go Live!* button with the facecam and the inevitable questions about where he's been and where Dream's gone is too daunting to handle.

He dreams of a man in a porcelain mask. Tied back with pale-blue ribbon, done up in a bow that is covered and hidden by tufts and curls of golden-brown hair. And this is awfully familiar, isn't it?

It's the same as before, the man is wearing that green cloak over his shoulders, his hood pulled back, clasped together by a simple loop and button tie. Still covering that black-purple armour. Then of course, in his hand is that axe and George knows how it gleams with that same shining darkness as the metal he wears.

They stand facing one another in the midst of nothing. George can't make out the ground beneath his feet in this grey-rainy blur surrounding them, with the wetness of what must be rain in his eyes. In front of him is a man that is surely Dream because he's wearing his mask - with hairline cracks fit back together like a poorly repaired vase. And that smile, crudely painted on, off-centre just slightly.

But here is where things differ. The man doesn't move, stood still on the spot. This time George has to draw closer through the fog.

This time George's hands don't take Dream's hands, no their steady path rises upwards to the mask on Dream's face. One hand grips the cold edge and he has to step closer for this next step as his other hand reaches around the back of Dream's head to pull loose the pale-blue ribbon.

Something weighted touches his wrist, George looks down. Dream's bare hand is holding onto it, the grip more anchored by gravity than any force behind it.

George stills for a second, but the curiosity to lift the mask, to see Dream's face is overwhelming. He lets the ribbon come free, tugs carefully to pull the mask away.

What he's expecting is the face of a man he knows not in this dream world, but something solidly corporeal and familiar.

Instead, there is simply nothing.

He pulls back the mask and realises there is no face at all. There is no man, there's no weight against his hand. He's holding this mask in the middle of the fog and he is completely on his own.

He doesn't even fall. The nothing is still and empty and he is alone.

George wakes up in his bedroom and he thinks it isn't so different from his dream.

His sleep schedule's as fucked up as usual. It's seven am and George hasn't slept in over twenty-four hours. Just finished streaming with the boys, the usual madness. It's two am in Orlando and he knows because he's got it saved to the clocks on his phone and maybe because he's memorised the time zone difference. It's not that much longer until he fixes this or at least tries to. But he misses Dream. God, he just wants to hear his fucking voice. The quiet voice he gets when he's as sleep-deprived as George, the words slow to fall out of his mouth and missing syllables because he's not got the energy to pronounce things properly. You can hear the roughness in the back of his throat because of a day of laughter that's made it raw. George wants Dream as sleep-drunk as he is to whisper in his ear and drag him to bed.

He has to remind himself that it's not much longer he has to wait. Force himself to go sleep before he does something stupid like call Dream just to hear him, press the phone to his ear and hold him there, close as George can get.

"I need to tell you something." Sapnap hesitates.

"What?" George isn't worried, but he puts his phone down on his desk, untucks his legs from underneath himself and waits.

"I may or may not, have kinda spoke to Dream, about some things. About you."

"Sapnap. I told you to let me handle it." George huffs.

"I know and you're going to. But he was freaking out, dude. I just needed to get him to chill."

"Is he okay?"

"Not really, he needs you. It's me and you who watch out for him and he just has me right now." George cracks one of his knuckles and sits with Sapnap's words.

"Not forever. Not even much longer."

"Obviously, but he doesn't exactly know that. I told him you needed some time."

"Oh." George swallows. "...Thank you."

"That sounded like it hurt to say, dude."

"It did a little. This is all... new. Normally we're like, being mean to each other or something. I don't think we're ever this serious"

"Things will go back to normal soon enough."

George finds he can't agree. He doesn't want normal, or at least the old version of it. Now he knows what he can have and he wants it more than he's wanted anything in his life.

Dream's streaming. George gets the Twitch notification on his phone and stares at it uncertainly. There's a half-packed case on his bed, clothes folded carefully and he stills in front of it. He wants to know, to hear Dream for a moment. He stops himself, George needs to finish packing his things. His cat breaks his stare-off with his phone, she has climbed onto the bed and sat in the middle of the case, on top of the neatly folded things.

"I can't pack you away in there." He says bluntly, looking at her like he's expecting a reply. She sneezes then swats at the air in his direction.

"I would if I could," George tells her, moving forwards so he can stroke her. He takes a picture with his hand in her fur and posts it. Trying not to think about who might see it.

[A Tumblr post appears in the *dreamnotfound* tag. Another one of many fans, speculating wildly about what the fuck is going on with Dream and George lately.]

dreamingearge:

Anonymous said

What are your thoughts on the Dream stream moment from earlier today? I can't be the only one who noticed the timing between George's Instagram post and Dream letting a zombie kill him?

Oh anon, you're opening a can of worms here. I've been thinking about this for a little while, but here is my full analysis of Dream's trip to London and why I think it confirmed DreamNotFound is real. (We'll get to the Instagram post thing at the end I promise). Full rant under the cut!

Let's start by establishing a timeline of events in chronological order. I'm going to be breaking down each moment and what it might mean for DNF.

Dream announces he's in London by posting those adorable pictures of George half asleep on the train (Underground? In the UK). Sapnap replies to this tweet with '*WHAT THE FUCK??????*' And then proceeds to 'go dark' for being left out of the trip.

What does this tell us? — Dream And George wanted to meet up without Sapnap for whatever reason. They left him out of their plans.

Why would they do this, he's their best friend? — I strongly believe that this is their first time meeting up as a couple and didn't want Sapnap to third wheel them (poor soul).

Dream then liked multiple tweets asking him to confirm he was in London, though he doesn't reply to anything that night. — Something I've noticed is that whilst they've been together Dream and George have barely interacted on Twitter or streamed. Obviously, because they're too busy spending time with each other.

The next interaction we get is a day later when Dream posts photos on Twitter of George getting attacked by a bird - how did he still manage to look cute?

Let's not forget Karl Jacob's reply to said tweet - '*GEORGE☺☺*' and Dream's reply to that: '*Back off he's mine.*' — I mean, come on. They practically ship themselves at this point.

Then we don't get anything for a while until Dream and George appear on Karl's Jackbox stream. Sharing a mic! Which broke Twitter, and confirmed for sure that they weren't lying about the trip.

There were too many moments in this stream! (I'll incl. links to clips, embedded.)
THEY NAMED THEMSELVES DREAMNOTFOUND WHAT MORE CAN I SAY?
Anyway, I suppose to an extent they do lean into pandering when playing Jackbox and their name definitely helped that. So maybe we could shrug that off.
But wait, there's more! Then we get their answer to the prompt '*Damn I failed No nut November because of...*' which was..... 'GeorgeNotFound'.

George responds by saying "That was Dream." And Dream replies to him with: "It's true." — I'm linking the clip here.
(Do y'all hear the smugness in Dream's voice?? I'm done. Man's really said '*I failed No Nut November because of GeorgeNotFound*'. I have no words.)

They lost to 'Dream and George Gay Moments Compilation' from Karl.... I'm just saying... but their friends love to talk about DreamNotFound. Sometimes even more than Dream and George do.

I don't want to get too caught up in Karl's stream that night, so I'll just rush through the rest by just saying that Dream and George bicker over their answers like an old married couple for the rest of the night. (Watch my favourite clip here.) The thing that I can never get over is how soft they are with each other, even when they're messing around. It's so cute, I'm sick.

Then, absolute radio silence for like five days. They don't stream, they're barely active on Twitter. We get a George YouTube video filmed before London and that's about it.

Again, I'm just saying, bf's spending time with each other...

You know what I'm going to talk about next. The *Minecraft But We Share A Keyboard* stream. I'm going insane, I've watched the vod too many times. There were So. Many. Moments.

They were so flirty this stream, it was sickening. Bickering again (it's their love language), then George asking Dream to whisper something in his ear.

THE "WE WENT TO BED SO LATE LAST NIGHT. I'M STILL TIRED." FROM GEORGE. ([link here.](#))

ARE YOU KIDDING ME???

Do they want to announce they're dating any louder?? Dream managed to cover it up pretty quickly by saying they were on call with Sapnap. But come on now, we all know the real reason they were up so late. And it definitely didn't include being on call with Sap ;) Then George quickly moves on, clearly trying to sweep it under the rug. If he had face cam on, can you imagine how red he would have been??? I can practically hear the blush in his voice.

What happens next is too much. I'm so done with their obvious flirting ugh, so Dream fully puts his hands in George's hair to mess it up. Like, guys, you don't need an excuse to touch each other, you're dating! The rest of the stream they literally go out of their way to be flirty on main.

Afterwards, we get nothing, we go into dnf drought yet again for three days. George goes MIA, Dream tweets a couple of things. But that's it.

Finally, we get the tweet that Dream's back in Florida. ;-; Nothing mentioning George and George is pretty inactive.

I'm for one at a bit of a loss. But I have some theories. If we view the trip as George and Dream's first meeting in person and as a couple. Then this is either *a)* they broke up and Dream went home or *b)* they're still together but Dream sadly had to leave.

Onto the last few pieces of analysis. George hasn't streamed since Dream was in London but he makes a few appearances. First, he streams GTA with Quackity, Karl and BBH but is distinctly quieter than usual. To the extent that the other's notice it and called him out on it. He told them he was just tired and there's a distinct shift where he clearly tries to keep up with their energy so they don't bring it up again. ([Link to clip here.](#))

Now, through *a)* we can view this as he's sad about the break up with Dream, which poor bb :((or *b)* He's sad that Dream is gone and is missing him, which is awwww :) I'm sincerely hoping for the second one!

He appears on Ponk's stream on the SMP, which was so cute, we haven't seen them together in so long. George will happily mess about on the SMP as long as it doesn't include lore LMAOOO. He seems okay here if a little subdued I guess.

Then there's Sap's alt Twitch stream. Which they're usually more chill and less hyper on anyway. George didn't talk much with Sapnap and Punz, mainly keeping quiet and being very bad at the game. What was unusual is he didn't respond/retaliate much to Sapnap's goading that he is trash at CS. Which is very unlike George.

That's pretty much it for George. Subdued and awkward since Dream left London!

Onto the Dream stream that literally just happened. First of all, I've missed Dream streaming so much :) it's been too long holy shit. Analysing his voice though, I can't be the only one who noticed how rough he sounded? Dream mentioned that travelling had made him a little sick. But again, think *a)* and *b)*, it could also be because of one of them...

Sapnap and BBH join the call. They keep it light. Dream has donos off, BBH asks some questions from the chat. Nothing significant really. When asked how the trip to London was, Dream just says *"It was good. We had a fun time —uh, yeah. I don't know."* He moves on pretty quick, you okay there Dream? Missing George??

I want to get to the end, so I'll just finally get to the Instagram post, *The Death by Zombie situation*. Twitter clocked it pretty much straight away, and I've already seen the clip so many times and people analysing what it means. Here's the clip. To summarise, George posts on Insta, I'm certain Dream got the notification on his phone and abandoned his game to look at it. He goes dead silent for a solid minute, even as Sapnap tries to get his attention. To the point that a zombie can take all his health and kill him! Like what the hell?? How do you not notice that a zombie is killing you?? I'm certain that Dream was so distracted by George that he forgot about his game. I mean, we all saw George's hand in that photo, right :)

Anyway, this brings back *a)* they broke up and are pining or *b)* they're still together and are pining because they miss each other.

I know this is an analysis post. But I have no definite conclusion yet on which I think is the most accurate! We're just going to have to wait for another stream or post I guess and wait for them to interact. Anyone pls let me know if you have any thoughts, leave me an ask or something. I'm very interested in your opinions!

#dreamnotfound #dnf #look what you started anon #I've pulled out the red string #we are fully analysing this shit #the whole london trip was a fever dream #u cant convince me otherwise #ask tag

—15 notes

George finds a scrap of folded paper, caught between his bedside cabinet and his bed. It's a folded over post-it note, easy to misplace. He unfurls it, smoothing out the creases. There aren't many words but those written on it speak of whispered wants, of soft sincerity. He presses it against his chest, speechless.

He calls his mum the day before the flight.

"Hello?" George greets when the call connects and there's no immediate reply. He stands leaning against the counter in his kitchen, picking at the peel of an orange. He puts the phone on the counter, on speaker.

"Hiya, is this a social call or are you wanting something?" His mum's cheery voice asks him.

"How do." George hears his dad's typical Yorkshireman greeting. It makes him grin, his dad never changes.

"I was just checking in, is that dad?" George removes the sticker from the peel and presses it to the back of his hand for no logical reason.

"Yes, you're on speaker! We're in the car, just been shopping."

"I can call back later if you want?"

"Breaks, love." George hears his dad say to his mum, voice stoic as usual.

"I saw it, we're slowing down, aren't we? Sorry George, your dad is backseat driving again. It's fine, we can talk now."

"Okay. Erm, so you know how Dream came to see me in London?" He brushes the ripped off bits of peel into a neat little pile and carefully pulls the orange into halves.

"Of course we do! It would have been nice if you had brought him to see us George. We would like to get to know him as well."

"He's worried we'll embarrass him, aren't you?" His dad chuckles.

"Yeah dad, you guys are very embarrassing. But, no. I'm going to see him in Florida in a couple of days and I wanted to ask if you could mind the cat." He's pulled off a segment of orange and put it into his mouth. Chewing slowly.

"Traffic lights, love."

"I see them! George, he's only just left you can't be missing him that much already. I know that long-distance is hard but—"

"What?" George swallows.

"Long-distance relationships can be very tough, I get that. When your dad and I were at University we only saw each other at Christmas and over the holidays. But it can work. You just have to call each other every day and it's so much easier nowadays with all those apps and FaceTimes."

"That's not what's happening. Wait. Wait, wait wait. Do you guys think we're... going out?"

"Well, yes. What else were we supposed to think?" His mum asks like the question is ridiculous.

"What is happening?" George laughs but he's not finding this that funny.

"George, you can't be telling us you and that boy aren't going out." George is beginning to think he's the only sane person he knows.

"How long have you thought this?" George has to ask them.

"I don't know, a year or two at most, right love?"

He imagines his dad has shrugged in reply because there is no audible confirmation.

"We're not dating! How, why did you guys even believe that?"

"I thought it seemed fairly obvious. You talk every day—"

"I talk to Sapnap every day." George interrupts.

"Yes, but we talk differently about people we love and people we're in love with. I'm your mother, I think I can tell the difference."

"Give way, love." His dad says, calmly.

"I'm stopping, I'm stopping." His mum replies and George is still reeling.

"I didn't talk about him like I was in love with him though!" But he's thinking, *did I?*

"Then I'm very sorry if we've misconstrued, you and Dream are lovely friends and I know that you care for each other very much."

"It's not- you haven't exactly misconstrued. I am in love with him, a little bit."

"Oh, darling that's wonderful! Isn't it wonderful?"

"Very wonderful, love."

"It's why I have to go to Florida. There's this whole mess and I really don't feel like explaining it again."

"You should come round for dinner tonight then if you're going away. It's been ages since we've last seen you."

"Okay, yeah. That would be good actually."

George ends the call after his mum goes on to rant at him about visiting more often and making sure he's taking care of himself.

Finally alone, George looks down at the orange pieces on his counter. Somehow not as enjoyable without someone to share them with.

The extent to which George will let this trip be the same is this: he is showing up in Florida unannounced, on Dream's (literal) doorstep. But that's it. Everything else he's doing his way. He's going to make this right.

Chapter End Notes

chapter song — is there a place i can go by trudy and the romance

We go a little meta this chapter. And I'm going to have to thank ImperialEvolution and their comments on last chapter for inspiring me because I could not stop thinking about how Tumblr and Twitter would react if the trip to London was real! There would be so much analysis of the posts and the streams, we would not be hearing the end of it. People would most definitely be using it as evidence that DreamNotFound is real.

i wanna be yours

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

He gets up at nine am even though his flight isn't for another ten hours. He can't lay in bed with his eyes shut for any longer. George is restless, so he stands in a slow stretch. Lets his eyes roam his room. The neatly packed suitcase sits by the door to the living room, his shoes beside it. The lighting is low and the sun, if it has risen, hasn't bothered to make an appearance yet.

The room is grainy with darkness and with the curtains pulled closed. George opens them, the view of the tiny courtyard full of bins to the back of his flat is nothing interesting. There are rows of them, no grass, just paved slabs and high brick walls. Roads make up both side of George's building and noise is a universal constant. It's either accept it or buy really good noise-cancelling headphones. George doesn't mind the noise, it's much better to deal with than total silence.

He lets his feet take him to the living room, then the kitchenette. George boils his kettle and wastes time scrolling through various social media apps, feeling every second of the morning drag. He has a cup of tea while looking out the window, where he comes across something he had failed to remember.

On the windowsill, sits a little plant in a terracotta pot.

When was the last time George watered it?

It must have been that first day Dream was in London. It had been a crispy curled up thing - more brown than green. It should still be. But something peculiar has happened. There are newly sprouted leaves, a much paler white-green, barely unfurling. The soil not as parched as he expected. George knows he hasn't watered this plant in weeks. It should be dead, right?

Unless, he wonders... Dream could have been watering it for him. He touches one of the delicate new leaves with the pad of his finger, lets it bounce back into place once he removes it.

Somehow, without George's notice, Dream did this. Probably taking a glass from the drying rack by the sink (there's always one there, washed but not put away) filled it with water and poured it in. George is struck by the idea of it.

His tea is cooling in his hand.

Dream comfortable in this space, noticing a little dying thing on the windowsill and taking care of it when George had forgotten.

George waters it too, before he showers and gets ready for the day. The smile that has formed never leaves his face.

"George, did you see any of Dream's stream the other day?" Karl Jacobs is eating something crunchy, George hears him pop some into his mouth after he finishes speaking, the satisfying crunch of what he thinks are crisps. Or chips, Dream's tried to tell him that's what they're called way too many times. Even though crisps is clearly the superior word.

Whatever, he's not getting into that now.

George looks over at the FaceTime call, where the phone is balanced on his suitcase, raised handle allowing it to stay upright. Karl is sat back in his own chair, upper body and the hint of a raised knee visible. There's a bag of Lays in his lap.

George is sat twiddling his thumbs, waiting to be picked up by the Uber driver who will take him to the airport. Karl is being used as his distraction.

"No. I didn't." He saw the notification that Dream was live and stayed away.

The flat is empty with just George in it. He'd dropped his cat off at his mum's last night and it's strange how quiet it feels with just him breathing within the walls.

"Did you hear anything about it.. on Twitter?"

Karl is dancing around something, George is in the middle of retying his shoelaces for the fifth time, but at this, he sits up. Let's the half-knotted lace fall loose.

"Why?" Something has dropped in George's stomach.

"Uh. Jeez. I don't want to be the one to tell you this." Karl is a blur of movement as he stretches forward and brings the phone to his face. Up close now. George grabs his own too, needs to feel the weight of the device in his hand and Karl's voice coming from it.

"You clearly want to tell me." George raises an eyebrow, Karl is smiling in that fake-funny way that tells George he's trying his hardest not to spill.

"You're right." He sighs eventually. "So I think some people have maybe connected a couple of dots between something that happened on stream with Dream and something that you did."

"What?" George is confused.

"You posted on Instagram, right? The pussy pic." Karl expands.

George grimaces. "Karl, why would you word it like that?"

"Sorry." Karl giggles.

George just sighs, moves the conversation along. "Yeah, so? I posted a picture of my cat."

"Dream saw it."

George barely flinches, he's aware that posting things on the internet means any number of people may see the posts he makes. So, Dream happened to be one of those people. That's pretty much inevitable. "Okay, I'm sure he did."

"Dream saw it on stream, in the middle of a speedrun."

George snorts. "Did he get a bad time or something? Are people reading into it?"

"He stopped for a full-on minute. And a zombie killed him. Who isn't reading into it?"

"But I mean, that's not too bad. That could have been anything."

"People think he died because of your post."

Take that one out of context, George thinks.

"Well, okay. That doesn't mean anything. He probably just..." George tries to reason. But he doesn't know what words to follow up with. Why would that make Dream let a zombie kill him?

"He said he was replying to a text," Karl informs him.

"There, he probably was." George shrugs easily.

"People don't exactly believe him. Do you believe it?"

"I haven't seen the clip. I don't know. It's Dream. It's fine." He takes a moment. "What do they think it means?"

"I didn't mean to worry you." Karl immediately reparates. George watches him drop a hand into his hair, squashing it a little as he rests his limb there. "It's the usual speculation you get. Put it with the rest of the shit that's on YouTube and Twitter."

Karl fluffs his hair out again, lets his hand fall away. "It's nothing, in reality, dude. It's a theory and we both know half the evidence for '*DreamNotFound*' is taken out of context or literally just you two doofus' playing into it."

Karl pauses, but he isn't finished. "But it means more to the people who know. *For real*. Those moments might have been fake or you two exaggerating. But that's past tense, right? There's something real to it now."

"It's been real to Dream for at least a year. That's what Sapnap said." George says because he's trying to comprehend what Karl is telling him and still in the process of going through everything he already knows.

He hasn't even had a chance to think about anything being made public, outside of himself and his friends. He's not one for making things like that known. Saying that George and Dream like their privacy is an understatement.

"What are you going to do?" Karl asks.

"What I was always going to do. If I ignore it, people won't think anything of it." He shrugs easily, but his pulse is racing.

George watches the clip on the ride to the airport. Dream's view of a surface cave. Entering to quickly grab some iron because he didn't get enough from the Iron Golem at the spawn village. He mines a piece and then stops moving. He doesn't tab out, there's no notification sound. But his mouse flicks a little then goes still, as though when he removed his hand he knocked against it.

There is Sapnap and Bad talking, a zombie growl and Dream is silent. He starts taking damage. Sapnap shouts his name, his voice that high, cracking, hysterical laughter at Dream disappearing. Then Dream's excuse, *"I was replying to a text."* He tries to hear the lie in Dream's voice, like the Twitter threads he's now seen have assured him is there.

But it's a well-executed cover-up that George could believe it if he wasn't so certain. He goes to his phone, opens Instagram and pulls up the photo.

This is what distracted Dream. George's cat, his hand. Nothing out of the usual for his Instagram feed. Nothing Dream hasn't seen before. Dream looked at this and something happened that made him pause. George's anticipation to reach his destination grows stronger.

Airports are boring and stressful and George just wants to get on his flight. He stands next to his gate, waiting to board. Currently inserting coins into a vending machine to buy a drink with his phone pressed to his ear. Sapnap's on the other end of the line, the call unexpected but George was more than happy to accept.

"I'm just saying, he's probably not going to know what to do with himself. Dream imagined you being in Florida with him a lot different." Sapnap sighs out.

"Well, me too. It's going to be fine. You agreed with me that this was the right thing to do, remember?" George grabs his water and scans the seating area. He finds a corner to take the call in without feeling as though half the people also waiting for the flight can hear his every word.

"It is. I'm not saying that. He's just going to cry like a little baby when he sees you."

"He's not going to cry." George rolls his eyes, the water bottle is cool to the touch, covered in a layer of condensation. He leans back against the wall he has found, letting his backpack drop from his shoulder and sit on the floor between his feet.

"George, this dude cries at everything. I don't have enough hands to count how many times I've seen Dream cry." Sapnap's outside somewhere, or in his car. George can hear traffic on the other end of the line and he thinks a Quadecca song is playing lowly in the background. Definitely in his car then.

"It's fine. I'm not going to make him sad enough to cry, idiot."

"You're putting past him that he won't happy cry? There will be tears." Sapnap assures, George just doesn't believe it.

"He's not that... emotional." George shifts uncomfortably.

"Just because no one's ever seen you cry before." Sapnap scoffs at him.

"Yeah, I'm not a baby like you and Dream. You guys will cry over anything."

"I don't cry."

"Oh-kay. Sure you don't." George scoffs at Sapnap's insistent tone now. He more than most people knows how secretly soppy his two friends can get.

"Are you going yet or what? You're being annoying." Sapnap huffs.

"You called me."

"I didn't expect you to answer. I thought you were gone already."

"Then why'd you even call?"

"I was going to leave an uh.. a voicemail."

"Saying what?"

"Nothing, it's unimportant."

"Sapnap."

"George."

"Tell me."

"No."

"Why?"

"Because you suck."

"Was it something nice? Can you not say it to my face?" George grins.

"Can't see your face, asshole."

"So, yes. What nice things were you going to say to me Sappitus?"

"I was going to tell you that I hope you and Dream don't work things out and that you're an annoying little freak."

"Were you gonna cry a little, piss your pants?" He mocks because he can't help but mock Sapnap.

It's instinct.

"Shut the fuck up dude, I don't know why I bother, I don't!"

George's snarky reply is put on hold when he hears an announcement for his flight on the intercom. Sees the people outside his gate start to hastily form a line. "Wait— My flight's boarding. I've got to go."

"Shit. Okay. Message me when you land." Sapnap asks of him, his voice once again sincere.

"I will."

"Bye-bye. Good luck."

"Bye."

Florida is hot. The humidity in the air hits him as soon as he steps off the plane, onto the jet bridge. It's palpable, it would be choking if he didn't have such steady determination to step forward. Following the stream of people to Border Control.

It's taking forever to get through TSA and get his bags. George is at Sanford Airport and he's going to have to get a taxi into Central Orlando. Just more and more time in Florida that's not with Dream. Though, this was the next quickest flight he could get out. So he's counting his blessings.

There's a family in front of him who George had watched board the plane in London. They sat a few rows ahead of George on the flight. The kids are that age where they're excited by everything but easily irritated. The parents are keeping them happy as they wait to see the TSA agents by telling them how much fun it's going to be to go to Disney World and see Mickey Mouse and George just really wants to see Dream. The air conditioning inside the airport is the perfect contrast to the heavy warmth of the outside.

On the wall, as he waits to go through security, George looks at this giant hand-painted mural of Florida's swamplands. The parents distract their kids by telling them to point to the gators hidden in the murky-painted waters between reeds and grass and spindly trees. It's sort of a gaudy, tacky thing to look at. Unexpected art to find at an airport and greet all those arriving. But they've also got a picture of the President hung on the wall so maybe this is just the way America does things.

Eventually, he's a free man. Walking to the taxi rank and asking a driver to take him to Dream's address.

He texts Sapnap once the car is moving, gets another good luck text back straight away.

They drive on the wrong side of the road here. It's a little bit unsettling. The driver's seat is on the wrong side of the car and everything. And the driver's a friendly enough guy but George is too awkward and nervous to make much conversation with a stranger.

Still, it does turn into an easy distraction from the silence that has left him feeling like a live wire.

"I mainly see families, not a lot of young people by themselves." The driver says, eyes on the road, but head tilting a little as he talks. He's an older guy, a fedora sat on his head, a southern drawl, as thick as molasses as he speaks. Something melodic about it.

"I'm visiting someone. He lives here. It's sort of a surprise actually." George's leg bounces, the driver laughs heartily at him. Clearly amused, or just in a good mood today.

"Hmm. That's nice of you, to come all this way. He must be someone special."

"He is. I don't know what I'd do without him."

The driver hums thoughtfully, gives his wheel a firm tap.

"I'm sure it'll be fine, whatever it is you're worried about."

George's mouth opens in shock. Is he that obvious?

"You're sweating buckets kid. Though I suppose that could be the heat, huh? And you haven't stopped moving since you sat down."

"It's, complicated." Is what George settles on saying.

"What isn't? If you're coming all this way to figure it out, I'm sure things will turn out just fine."

"I hope so."

George takes this stranger's reassurance and clings to it desperately. He watches the road and the heat beating down on it. Making a mirage of shimmering heat-haze across the tarmac. Impossible, untouchable water-like illusions.

Finally, they turn off the Interstate and head into something more like suburbia. George thinks there is maybe nothing more vastly different than an American block of houses compared to a British one. Here a single home taking up where an entire row of London townhouses would fit. All of them fully-detached. Most fitting that American iconography of the white-picket-fences, long-driveways and front porches.

They stop in front of a house that could be any other on the street.

"Well, we're here kid." The driver puts the car in park.

This one is Dream's house. George steadies his breathing.

"Do you mind waiting here? I'll only be a couple of minutes." He asks.

"Sure, sure." The driver smiles at him reassuringly.

If he lays here long enough, Dream thinks he might simply just become part of his bed. He doesn't even think there's anything wrong with that, getting to lay down all day and not move anywhere or do anything. Except for Patches, who he will get up to make sure has food and water.

And okay, this wallowing in self-pity look isn't very good on him. Dream is aware but he doesn't do anything to change the fact he is wallowing. He scratches an itch on his bare stomach, listens to his certified Sad Bangers playlist - on a private session so every person on Twitter doesn't know this current pool of sadness he's soaking in.

He checks his phone for messages, there's a couple waiting for him. Nothing urgent, not what he was looking for.

You see, Dream's finally mastered the art of doing nothing.

He could win an award in it and in his speech he'd thank his parents for their unwavering support. He'd talk anecdotally about being the kind of kid who could not sit still for five minutes, how it's taken him many years to get where he is today. But finally, doing absolutely fuck all comes easy to him.

Lying in bed is not boring! It takes practise and dedication. He'd end his speech by addressing directly the people out there like him. He'd be an inspiration. Remind them they too can sit and do nothing, if they just commit hard enough.

If you believe in yourself, you too can lay about in the woes of heartache, just like him!

There's a knock at the door and Dream, who has just adjusted the pillow behind him into the most optimal comfortable position, ignores it. It's probably just the mailman.

Back to our regularly scheduled pining, Dream skips a song on his Spotify because it's not quite fitting the chill sad vibes he's going for today.

There's another knock, more insistent. It makes Dream pause. His phone dings, a notification, so he turns it over, frowning.

GEORGE

I'm outside your house

GEORGE

Answer the door

GEORGE

KNOCK KNOCK

DREAM

is this a joke?

DREAM

George, please don't do this.

GEORGE

Don't be an idiot. Let me in.

"Oh shit."

The house is a mess, Dream's a mess. his stomach lurches terribly. he flies out of bed, tripping over the sheets tangled around his legs and stumbles to the floor in a pathetic heap.

"Shit." He scrambles to free himself. His hands fly to his phone again.

"Shit, shit, shit." He mutters.

DREAM

give me a second

George texts back as he's pressing send:

GEORGE

The sun is trying to kill me.

Dream ignores whatever the fuck that means.

He's only wearing boxers. He needs clothes ASAP. There's a pile of them on his floor, Dream shoves on a t-shirt and sweatpants and hopes they're not too gross.

Is there time to call Sapnap? He doesn't think so. There's not even room to panic because George is at the door. Dream is terrified and ecstatic.

He gives himself a second to stare at his reflection in the mirror. He looks like shit. Tired despite spending his days sleeping. Pale - that's probably the shock. Dream rubs his hands over his face, scrubs his eyes. As he's legging it down the stairs, he runs a hand through his hair. Somehow managing to not trip over his own feet.

It's three in the afternoon, the sun is high in the sky and it is lethal, especially to a pale-skinned Brit used to a sun that barely shines at all. George stands a few steps back from the doorway when Dream pulls it open.

"You're here." Dream's in genuine disbelief. George stands in front of him with the bad haircut that he somehow pulls off and stubble on his jaw, his eyebrow with the scar that has a story that takes forever to get George to tell. His mouth, which Dream has actually kissed! Lips pink and perfect and they look bitten like he's been nervously chewing them on the way over. Dream could go on, he really could.

"I'm here." George is smiling and Dream is in too much shock to return it.

"Is this how you felt?" He manages to squeak out and George just looks amused by him. He's stood on Dream's doorstep, feet on the concrete and he knocked on the door. Dream wonders what he'll look like standing in the middle of Dream's living room, his kitchen or his bedroom. He swallows.

"Pretty much, if you're feeling like you're doing a drop on a rollercoaster but never-ending that is." George snorts.

"Exactly that.." Dream falters. "Are you— do you want to come in?"

"No."

Dream's stomach drops, as it would on a rollercoaster, George is right.

"Oh."

"It's not that, I got a hotel." George's smile cracks open, Dream swoops and soars.

"You did? Of course, you did." He can't quite get his head around this. He thinks he gets what George meant in London. Seeing someone where they shouldn't be, where they've never dared to step before. It's throwing him through a loop.

"I just wanted to show up on your doorstep. Let you know I'm here."

He's smiling still and he looks a little flustered. Awkward as Dream feels.

"George, I'm—"

"Don't say sorry, Dream." George interrupts and Dream's entire thing, the self-composure that he'd hastily tacked in place as he flung himself down the stairs to answer the door, it sort of just all collapses in on itself and it doesn't even matter. George is looking at him in the Florida sun.

"...Sorry." Dream can't help it, he's been apologising in his head for the last few days and they've all built up. He needs to get them out. He winces.

George snorts.

"Where are you staying?" Dream asks after clearing his throat. He's trying to be polite here. Because he doesn't know how you step into a conversation with *'I kissed you, told you I loved you*

and left you in an airport bathroom. Hear that you might maybe love me too? Will you confirm that or can you just let me down easy, please. I won't ask anything of you ever again.'

"In the city, International Drive."

"Shit, that's gotta cost a lot."

"I'm being a tourist, I thought it would be nice."

"Yeah, it will be. It is nice." And George stops to look at Dream, grin slow and impossibly perfect. "I might need a tour guide though, I don't really know where the best places to eat are around here. Do you know anyone who might be up for the job?"

"I— I might know someone." George has shocked him into smiling. Pure nervous energy is racing in Dream's veins. Here is George in front of him and it's more than he could ever ask for. "Do we, are we going to have a talk, about what happened?" His eyes feel wet, he has to blink away the sudden blurriness.

"Yeah, we need to talk about it. But not yet. I'm going to go, for a little bit. The driver's still waiting." And Dream notices for the first time the car parked by the roadside.

"I just needed you to know I was here." Then he's looking at Dream with so much certainty that it is unmistakable. "That I came here for you Dream."

"George." He knows how he must sound, he's so gone it's not even funny.

"We're going to talk. I'll message you when I'm back at the hotel and we can meet up properly. You can be my tour guide for a while and then we'll talk. Just not yet."

"You know what you're doing." Dream swallows, and it's just a fact. Stating the obvious. George seems so calm and Dream is so not.

"One of us has to." It's not said with any venom but it stings Dream nonetheless.

"I— sorry."

"It's okay Dream. I'll see you soon."

"I'll see you, George." Dream says and watches George walk back down the drive, winded by all of this and completely in awe. He needs to call Sapnap, he needs to sit down before his legs give out from under him.

George is in Florida and everything is going to be fine.

He cries when he shuts the door behind himself. Stood alone in the hallway. Laughing through tears in sheer disbelief. Dream's felt tired for so long, heavy with the weight of what he feels and has done. It's still there, the weight. But George is here and it's eased some of the pressure. He stands between rooms, lingering until the walls come back into focus and he can feel his feet, planted on the cold floor.

Dream calls Sapnap not long after.

"You knew. You totally knew didn't you?" Is the first thing Dream says, and the smile can be heard in his voice.

"Knew what?" Sapnap replies in barely passable monotone.

"Shut up." Dream snorts. "I can't believe he's here!"

"Who is where Dream?" Sapnap bullshits.

"George is here. You know he's here."

"Oh, that's what you're talking about. I thought you might be talking about someone else."

"How long have you known he was coming?"

"I don't know, since he told me."

"Which was when?"

"Uh, just under a week ago." Sapnap sighs, casually.

"Holy shit." Dream runs a hand through his hair, it flops back onto his forehead once he lets go. Grown long from London and still uncut.

"You good dude?"

"Better now." He huffs out a laugh that is more an exhale. "It's all going to be fine."

"Of course it is."

Dream showers, changes into actual clothes and texts George and Sapnap separately. George to confirm what they're doing and Sapnap because the idiot won't stop teasing him about his reaction to seeing George, asshole.

They end up going out when the sun is already setting so that while they're walking it isn't as hot and George doesn't immediately combust like the sunless vampire he is. Dream's leg bounces the entire drive to George's hotel, he tries to focus on the road, turns up the song on the radio until it numbs the part of his brain that is overthinking everything.

George is already stood outside the hotel when Dream pulls into the parking lot. Approaching

while Dream completely fucks up pulling into a spot, halfway between two spaces. Looking like an absolute asshole to anyone who might see it. He doesn't straighten out, because that just feels even more embarrassing. George doesn't seem to notice, or if he does, he doesn't care enough to comment on it.

He waits by the side of the car for Dream to get out.

"Hey." Dream squints, the sun is in his eyes a little and he's left his sunglasses in the car. But he's all in now, no turning back for anything.

"Hi." George's eyes are honey-coloured in the light.

Then, George hugs him and Dream's eyes widen in surprise. He's warm and smells like the cologne he always uses. Dream's seen the bottle, half-empty, on top of one of George's cabinets in London. By the time he's no longer still in shock, George is already moving away. Smiling awkwardly.

"Erm, do you know anywhere we can go?"

"Want to just walk for a bit, see what we find?" Dream looks around. Right, he was supposed to be the idea man here. He might as well be in London, that's how little a grasp Dream has on his surroundings.

"Okay, yeah." George follows Dream's lead. They leave the hotel parking lot to the sidewalk. Shoulder to shoulder as they go. Directly opposite George's hotel is the Orlando Eye. Dream smiles, it's smaller than London's, obviously. Only built when the area was developed a few years ago.

"I can see it from the window of my room." George notices Dream looking towards it.

"Do you want to..?" Dream asks. He's never been up to it either.

"Yeah, let's do it," George replies, smile wide, and so they start walking towards the building that fronts it.

"Um, so how was your flight?" Dream asks, and internally he's already cringing because he doesn't know what to say. It's so easy to talk to George, but right now he's having trouble getting words out of his mouth and thoughts into his head. George looks good in the Florida sun, with red already colouring his cheeks and nose and the warm glow of the setting sun on his skin.

"It was so long. They had movies and stuff you could watch, but I couldn't um, couldn't concentrate on any of them very well."

"Flying's the worst. I get that." Dream nods along agreeably.

"Don't think it was flying that made it hard to concentrate Dream." George gives him a look, says it in that dry ironic tone of his.

Dream blinks. "Oh."

"I slept for a couple of hours though." George moves on, doesn't wait for Dream to catch up and comment on what he just said. "There was turbulence at one point, that woke me up."

Dream is struggling through that last thing. Of George admitting so nonchalantly, expecting Dream to be completely fine with it. There's a long silence, it's Dream's fault. He's taken too long to reply.

"So, what's the deal with airline food?" Dream mutters, awkwardly.

George snorts, eyes-rolling. "Shut up, idiot."

Something settles after that and Dream tries to move on as George has. They wait at a crossing, for the lights to change so they can get over the road and George looks to him.

"Do you really get fined for crossing a road when it's not at like an official crossing here?" George asks.

"Jaywalking?"

"If that's what it's called." George shrugs cluelessly.

"Yeah, roads like this especially." Dream nods at the three lanes they have to cross.

"That's so weird. America is weird."

"Don't get me started on how weird your country is George." Dream laughs, there are plenty of things he noticed when he was in London that don't make sense at all. Before he can start listing them, halfway over the crosswalk, Dream's hand brushes George's. Arms touching from shoulder to elbow. And Dream doesn't know if it was him, stepping into George's space or George into his. But as Dream corrects his course, he feels something touching his hand. George reaching out and squeezing his hand quickly, tangling their fingers.

As soon as the contact is there it's gone. Dream slows, George has pulled ahead, reached the other side of the road and he looks back at Dream as he catches up.

There must be something in Dream's expression because George laughs at it shortly.

Dream just looks away, embarrassed and speechless.

"Anyway, where do we go from here?" George raises a brow once they're stood side by side.

"You're the worst." Dream says instead.

"What's that, sorry?" George is grinning, wolfishly. Dream hates him so very much.

"*The Worst.*" Dream emphasises.

They go into the building to get onto the Eye and Dream finally gets some cold air back into his lungs.

"They have a Madame Tussards here?" George is looking over at the entrance to it at the left side of the building as you step inside, past some sort of VR car racing experience that flashes loudly.

"Yeah, do you wanna go in?" Dream asks.

George raises an eyebrow at him, lip curling in amusement. Mouth caught on his teeth as he smiles. "Ew no. Don't you think wax figures are kind of creepy?"

"Very. Could be funny though."

George shrugs. "I'd rather just go on the Eye."

So they do. It's not busy at the moment, only a handful of people walking around and by some

miracle, they get a pod to themselves. They're smaller than the ones in London.

The two of them step inside, Dream following after George who watches the doors shut behind him. Slowly, they rise. Dream's always had this slight fear of heights, it doesn't really bother him if he doesn't think about it. He cast it from his mind easy enough in London. But he's still uneasy when the door seals and they start moving.

George snorts, Dream turns to him.

"What?"

"Stripper pole." George points to the white circular seat in the middle of the pod, where there's a metal pole through the centre that is very clearly supposed to be used as a support railing to hold onto.

"You are so immature." Dream is laughing though. George's laughter is so hard it comes out in gasping hiccups. He's clearly amused himself. They're a quarter of a way up by the time they settle down again.

"This is cooler than the London Eye." George declares.

"How? There's so much more to look at on the London Eye."

"There's plenty to look at here." And George is looking right at Dream as he says it. "I could look at this view forever."

"You—" Dream is frozen to the spot and the wheel is still turning but everything seems to stop. George is backlit by a burnt-orange sky and he's watching Dream with amusement in his eyes.

Dream can't keep letting him get away with this.

"Can you see your house from here?" George turns away, one of his hands falling to the railing, Dream watches his movement, takes in George's side profile, glancing back at Dream.

"Probably not." Dream clears his throat.

"Point some stuff out to me, I want to know what I'm looking at."

"Okay." Dream says after a long second, taking careful steps to reach George's side. He needs a moment to get his bearings, remember any of what he sees that isn't George.

"Um. I think that's the Epcot Centre, over there. Can you see it?" He's pointing to a spherical shape in the distance, it's always reminded Dream of a giant golfball.

The Orlando skyline is pretty flat, going on for miles, with the cities highlights and attractions broken up by green wetland and lakes.

"I think that's Universal Studios, over there." Dream moves his directional point and George follows his gesture. Dream doesn't know what's happening here. George is all put together and direct, saying things Dream has only imagined he'd say, never expected.

Then in an instant, everything seems to get brighter. Dream blinks, the Orlando Eye's lights are turning on as the sky darkens. Sunset is quickly sinking, colour slipping from the sky. The colours of the wheel go white then red and back again. They're halfway around to the top, the world only getting smaller beneath them.

"Have you been to all the theme parks here?" George asks him and he's not looking at the skyline at all. Quietly watching Dream.

"I guess. I used to go with my sisters and my brother a lot in the summer, or with friends, if we had the money."

"That's so cool. When I was a kid we had, like, nowhere cool to go during the day."

"Have you ever been to a theme park before? Do they even have them in London?"

"They have some, I went to Chessington on a school trip once when I was fourteen, I don't really remember it."

"Chessington? That is so British." Dream laughs.

"Shut up. I don't know." George rolls his eyes, smile warm and embarrassed. "I went to Winter Wonderland with Ponk and our mates that one time. If that counts."

"You went on rides didn't you?"

George shrugs, a slight rise and fall of his shoulders.

"That can count."

He turns away, Dream gets to stare at his side profile again. He watches George's eyes as they scan the scenery.

"Don't you think it's weird, being in another country?" George asks eventually.

"Not really. There are differences, but not that many."

Dream doesn't think he could forget this picture of George in front of him for as long as he lives. There was a time when all he had was footage of George through a screen, pixelated and digital. He can never go back to settling for that.

"Yeah, but don't you realise how big the world actually, like, is? As a concept, as a whole." George turns back to him, turns his back completely against the view. Leaning on the railing, head tilted to look at Dream and wait for an answer. He's got this wild look in his eye and Dream can't begin to unravel all the things George says.

Dream mirrors his position, their sides pressing together. There's no fake yawn manoeuvre as Dream puts his arm on the railing around the back of George. He just does it and it's the boldest thing he's done so far. It feels like finally catching up.

"How big the world is.." He echoes George's words, gives himself a few seconds longer to think. "I guess most of the time I'm too busy thinking about other things to worry about it."

"What like?"

And Dream doesn't have any hesitation as he replies to George.

"You."

George looks like he doesn't know what to say.

"I didn't expect that."

Dream blows out a huff of air. "Me either to be honest."

They settle on food next, now that the air has cooled down considerably. Walking down International Drive until they settle on some casual family sports grill. It's got a roofed outdoor seating area, open to the night and people passing by. The walls are lined with large screens showing American sports that George doesn't have half a clue about. Where there aren't screens there is sports memorabilia. A mixed collection as though they couldn't quite settle on the one sport, a signed baseball bat next to a framed football jersey. Photos of players George doesn't know anything about. They could pass him on a street, sit on one of the tables nearby and he wouldn't have a clue.

"Who's playing?" He asks Dream, looking in the direction of some American Football game happening on a screen.

"Uh.. Miami Dolphins versus Los Angeles Rams." Dream tells him. George blinks cluelessly, despite asking.

They eat food and George drinks what Dream calls, '*real American sweet iced tea*' because apparently, the bottled Lipton Peach Iced Tea George buys from Tesco at home doesn't count.

And Dream's missed just sitting and talking about stupid shit with George, it feels easy. Feels how it always has. Maybe because his feelings for George are just so inherently a part of him and how he has lived his life for so long.

He remembers a time over a year ago. Back when George didn't even know his face and Sapnap could still laud it over him. When he was so scared of giving in to what he knew had seized his heart. Where he put himself through the process of figuring it out, compartmentalising the parts of Dream and George and *DreamandGeorge*. Time passing and passing but the feelings never left.

Making things easier by passing flirting off as friendly jokes and hoping to dear god that George never picked up on his sincerity.

And Dream knows that friendship and romance are so tangled for him. That he would say the same shit to Sapnap, share the same things and give to them in the same amounts.

Because friendship is just choosing another person as yours. Choosing them over and over. Having an unspoken connection and dedication to one another's lives. Choosing to share life with them. So Dream thought that if he was in love with this one friend, surely he had to be in love with them all. That love and friendship are a sliding scale and he just loved George to the furthest degree the scale could go. He loves in extremes.

Something changed. He was in love with George and it uprooted his whole internal understanding of how love and friendship work.

They sit and share a meal together and so much time has passed between Dream realising and George figuring it out. Yet George still makes the same dumb jokes he always does and Dream still reacts to them. Dream thinks it means that love has always been there for them, they just needed all this time to figure it out.

"You are not better at chess than me George." Dream doesn't know how they got onto this topic, only that he will not be proved wrong. George can argue it however he likes, Dream will not budge.

"I'm better than Sapnap, so." George shrugs, an attitude like he's already won and that just makes

Dream want to prove that he hasn't even more.

"You are not implying I'm worse than Sapnap." Dream exclaims, laughing. He sits back in his chair.

"You don't play often enough! I'm saying I play Sapnap all the time and win against him every single time. He's trash. You played Sapnap that one time and lost, remember? So logically, I am the best chess player." George is so self-righteous. It makes Dream roll his eyes impatiently.

The problem is the two of them always have to be the one in the right. It's fun to argue because neither backs down even when they're wrong. They just like riling each other up. There's something cathartic about hearing George's voice affected and seeing the colour rise to his cheeks, biting back just as lethal. Knowing George can take as much as he gives.

"He wouldn't stop gloating about that." Dream remembers the match, he'd been very tired that day. "That still doesn't prove I'm worse! I had one bad game with Sapnap *one time*. I could beat you, easy!"

"We'll play again then. I'll still win. I bet you five gift subs I win." George is so cocky, Dream huffs.

"We can do better than that, fifty gifted." Dream is overly confident, as cocky as George is.

"Not fifty. Five is more than enough."

George is always the same, he'll commit but still but he won't stake his own money on it. Dream rolls his eyes in clear view.

"You wouldn't spend fifty gift subs on me if you lost? Sore loser much." He teases.

"No. Five is more than enough for you."

"George, you literally have more subs than me." Dream knows for a fact that there are more people subbed to George on Twitch than him. George knows this for a fact too.

"Ten?" George negotiates.

"Twenty-five." Dream counters.

"Twenty?" George tries.

"No! I'll go back up to fifty, I swear."

"Twenty-five. I'll settle." George resigns.

And Dream laughs at him, a mocking scoff. "If you were so confident in your skill why do you even want to lower the number idiot? Worried you're going to be the one who has to pay out?"

"No." George frowns.

"Fine." Dream rolls his eyes. "Here, I'll gift you fifty if I lose George. That is how confident I am. You can do whatever you like. But I'm putting my money where my mouth is." Dream challenges, eyes narrowed.

"Back to the original offer then. Five is more than enough for you." George says loftily.

"George!" Dream lets out a bark of laughter.

And George is laughing at Dream and with him and they laugh together for a long time. Conversation overflowing as though the week that they weren't together was a year apart.

Dream is in his element talking, explaining things he's passionate about like the speedrunning tournament he's planning on setting up with Punz and a few others speedrunners that are interested in the idea.

"In a way, I'm almost glad the speedrunning shit happened. Not that it was very fun, but I feel better now I'm on the other side of it like I can move on to doing bigger things."

"You literally speedran on stream the other day, you've hardly moved past it."

And Dream stills. George must realise what he's admitted because his eyes flash.

"You saw that, huh?" Dream laughs nervously.

"I maybe saw something."

Dream swallows.

"I care about you.. a lot. I've been punishing myself while we didn't talk. And I saw that picture and it... surprised me. It wasn't even the picture itself. It was the caption." Dream shakes his head, a wry smile on his face. He's looking down at the table, fiddling with the paper wrapper from his straw.

"Cat?" George smiles carefully.

Dream groans, head falling back as he huffs in embarrassment.

"I just— I missed you. Remember when you told me about being at home? Going downstairs at night for a cup of tea with your mom and dad?"

"Yeah."

"I like it when you tell me stuff like that. Like I'm seeing inside *The Enigma That Is George Not Found*."

George makes eye contact for a good few seconds, Dream sinks like a ship going under.

"You don't tell me everything either."

Dream hits the ocean floor, sand is unsettled by the impact, blinding his vision.

"I know. I'm fucking terrified of you." His voice has gone shaky.

George nods. "I'm very scary."

Dream huffs, embarrassment colours his cheeks. "Shut up. You're not scary, I'm just... scared of you."

"Makes sense," George says, same annoying, agreeable tone.

He breaks though, a smile tugging at his mouth as he catches Dream's eye again.

"You're so dumb." Dream sighs.

"Yeah."

The, *You Love Me Anyway* goes unspoken but is understood in the way George's eyes sparkle and Dream has to look away, overwhelmed by the intensity.

"I found something that you left behind in London," George begins. All serious and nervous-looking when Dream glances back at him.

"What is it?"

It takes George a second, his jacket is on the back of his chair and he reaches around to get something from the pocket. Out from it, he pulls a tiny, folded piece of yellow paper. Dream knows it in an instant. His heart seizes.

"I wanted to give it back to you." And he's careful with his gaze as he hands it to Dream. Lets their hands brush in a way that is not accidental, pressing it into the centre of Dream's palm.

"You found it." Dream closes his fingers around the paper.

"You must have dropped it, or..." *Dot dot dot.*

And so Dream begins to tell the story. "You remember we went into St Paul's?"

George nods, watching closely as something begins to unfold.

"Someone had stuck it on the wall. I don't know who or why. It was in the Whispering Gallery. I noticed it as we were leaving and I took it."

A tiny square of yellow, stark in contrast to the old walls and dark wood. Moments after Dream had considered confessing and George has saved him the trouble of overthinking. If he had done it then... Imagine if he had told George then.

"There was this night." And the story becomes less about time and place and more about feeling. "You were sleeping next to me and I couldn't stop thinking about it. Just repeating the words in my head. You've read it, right?"

Of course he has.

"I couldn't tell you that I— I couldn't say that I loved you. The words just wouldn't come out of my mouth. Even when I knew that you wouldn't hear me, whispering it to myself. It couldn't change anything if I did say it then. But if I said it out loud it would change everything. Or it would change nothing. It would change me— this makes no sense." Dream laughs nervously, self-conscious of his rambling.

He runs a hand through his hair. "It'd make everything I've been feeling so much more, real."

George swallows, Dream watches the movement. He continues. "Then I blurted it out at the airport and—"

There's loud cheering a table over that throws Dream off course and if we go back to that boat metaphor, he's sunk to the bottom of the ocean but a current has taken hold of his drowned parts, thrashing him against the rocks and sand in the depths of the turbulent waters. Disturbing his

descent.

"This isn't the place to talk about everything, is it?" Dream blinks, he takes a sip of water to get rid of the dry ache in his throat.

"Come back to my hotel."

"George." And his voice is weak, scared he's pushing too far. Even though George is the one who offered in the first place.

"Dream, don't be weird. We're going to talk, in private." George snorts, and it's not like Dream was thinking of it in that way. But now he is a little, a lot.

"Nothing would be weird if things were, y'know, weird." He blabbers and George is just tracking the journey Dream's face goes through, the wince as he finishes speaking.

"I know that. You're the one being awkward about this."

"I can't believe this is happening to me." Dream huffs, collapsing in a dramatic mess against the table. They both know what he means, how did Dream become the awkward one in this situation? How has George somehow gained the ability to know exactly what needs to be said?

They pay the bill and go.

George grabs Dream's hand again on the walk back and not that Dream's counting, but he holds it a few seconds more.

Dream runs his thumb over George's before he can let go this time.

He follows George as they walk back to his hotel like a lovesick fool.

George's hotel room is basically the same size as his flat in London. Dream tells him this as they step into it. It's tiled all the way through, plain in decor but nice enough.

"No, it isn't." George frowns because his living room/ kitchen is twice the size of this kitchenette with a sofa in it. He is extremely insulted that Dream would think so. He scuffs his shoe on the tiles, they don't creak the same as his floors at home.

Dream had only said it to be annoying in all fairness. They're incomparable, George with his dorky Harry Potter and Star Wars trinkets and the really weird mugs in his cupboard. His bookshelf which is less book more shelf for more clutter and collectables. His sofa, sunken and cosy. The leaky tap and the buzzing fridge, small but not at all claustrophobic.

George's bedroom with the constantly messy sheets, the warm whirr of his PC, the light in the morning and his cat curled up on the pile of clothes that need washing.

In this hotel. There is little to say about the interior. Here is a room with magnolia walls and tiled floors. Off to the side is another room with a bed and a bathroom that is accessible through it. Made to be easily functional, not a home or somewhere that invites you to stay longer than the allotted time booked for.

From the window, which Dream looks out of, you can see across the I-Drive, to where the Orlando Eye is lit with colourful neon lights. It's pink-purple now, shifting between colours slowly, a bright spot in the full glossy darkness of the night sky.

Dream spins back around, George is sitting against the arm of the sofa, watching Dream. His eyes are dark in thought.

"You are the stupidest idiot I have ever met in my entire life." Is what George says, cutting gaze meeting Dream's. And it's not at all what Dream is expecting.

"I know." He falters. Startled by George with his red cheeks and dark, wide eyes. He's not scary at all, and yet.

"You know why I'm here Dream." George's voice is steady.

"I do?"

George nods. Then, "We need to talk about everything, properly."

"I should finish what I started earlier."

So he does.

"I came to London because I—" Dream wrings his hands together. Here he is, standing in front of George, backlit by the pink-purple light of the Orlando Eye and saying everything he has kept secret for so long.

He didn't think he could do this, doesn't know even now as the words leave his mouth.

"I realised how I felt about you a long time ago." He decides this is a good start. "I thought I had accepted it for what it was. And I did, I could keep being your best friend, you are my best friend. But I don't know, I reached this point where all I wanted to do was see you, to tell you. I don't do shit in half-measures." Dream grimaces.

If you can imagine it, picture the wreckage of a ship washed ashore. Broken and fragile, it knows that any strong enough wind or wild enough storm could turn it to nothing but splinters and driftwood. Inside it sits valuables no man has ever plundered.

Along comes a wandering explorer stumbling into the spilt guts of this boat's remains. On hesitant foot, he comes searching, as most curious explorers would. For lost treasure. He treads carefully, as mindful of himself as he is of the old ship he wanders. The boat is hesitant and afraid, the last time man tried to conquer it, it went careening sideways with holes in its sides. Lost to time. But this man is not the same as those who would have it destroyed. He knows the value of old ships, recognises the history and the memory that lives within them. And the ship is thankful that someone has found it. That there is someone that knows of its voyage even in this state of existence. That finally it is being seen. A daunting, scary thing and yet the ship allows the explorer to learn it.

"—I remember booking the flight, I remember that night and it wasn't even anything out of the ordinary. It was just another night." He smiles, fond and full of an overwhelming urge to cry, to take George and pull him close.

"But I was so frustrated and I wanted to tell you so badly. I booked it. It's like I was watching someone else do it. Like it wasn't even me. Thinking I was going to arrive in London and tell you, fuck the consequences." He was thinking of an end of movie scene, not realising he was just stepping into the beginning. Look at him now, reciting an unpractised monologue, stood in front of this singular audience member. The only one he cares about, the only reaction he wants to know.

"But then I was struck with how stupid that whole idea was for nine hours. I didn't know how you felt, we'd never even met before George. I was crazy."

"So I told myself, I'd let you see me, I'd stay as long as you'd let me and I was still thinking that I'd tell you when the time was right. When I was certain and before I left London." His intentions were so good and he had thought he was good enough too, to follow through and stick to it. To tell George when the time was right. But it never was. He never could.

The next part comes out much, much quieter. "I still couldn't."

He feels as though he's choking, something clawing at his throat, Dream breathes out slowly, settles back into his own skin.

"I realised that night in the kitchen," George tells him carefully, an aside that makes it clear that George is not a member of the audience at all. He's standing on this stage with Dream.

Dream nods in understanding, voice shaking. "It was so selfish and stupid, what I did."

George pins him with the intensity of his gaze and if Dream already didn't feel caught he certainly does now. "Why did you run?"

"I had already made up my mind about how you would react. I— I wanted you to react badly I think, so I'd have an excuse to run. But you didn't, you wouldn't. And I ran anyway because I'm the one who couldn't handle it. I wasn't even ready."

"You surprised me. You didn't give me a chance."

"I know, I do, I was just, I was thinking of myself. I kissed you for myself, I ran to protect myself. I kept thinking that this was it. I'd been in London this whole time trying to accept that I needed to tell you I— that I loved you. Then I ran out of time, and then I ran. I am sorry. I really am George."

"Don't be sorry. You don't need to be sorry." He looks half furious and half something else. Something that Dream is optimistic about. "You're not selfish, you were scared and we— we just didn't get the time right."

It takes a moment.

"And now?"

George smiles, Dream crumbles. If he were a shipwreck, broken up by the ocean floor and washed ashore for wandering explorers. He would also be the splinter-sized pieces of wood that have become part of the sand, no different from the rest of the rocks and debris that make up the sandy beaches floating from shore to shore.

"I've only got this room for two weeks," George comments coyly.

"My house has a bed."

Dream revels in George's reaction. He looks away first, rolling his eyes at Dream's grin.

"Don't you have a spare room? I can sleep there." He's smart about it, George always has something to say, some retaliation.

"The bed's, uh. Broke." And Dream's a sucker, so in love with George and so obviously willing to do anything to get him to stay.

"Broke?" One of George's eyebrows raises in an arch

"Completely."

"You're an idiot."

Dream's smiling, helpless. This is going better than he could ever have expected.

He realises he hasn't touched George this entire time and he doesn't know how to start. Dream doesn't know what George wants of him, doesn't want this to be anything like that bathroom in London. He doesn't want to push his luck.

"Can we— can we forget that was our first kiss. I ruined it. I wish I could change what happened." He frowns.

"I know you do. But we can't change it. *It did happen.*" George tells him firmly.

Something sinks in Dream's stomach at being reminded he is the one who fucked this up. "It was so shitty of me, I'm sorry. I didn't warn you, I didn't ask you if it was okay. I was so inconsiderate and idiotic and—" He's rambling, vision gone a little fuzzy at the edges.

"Dream."

"I wasn't thinking—"

"*Dream.*"

"—What?" His voice breaks into this soft little word, blinking carefully as he looks to George for answers.

"I don't want to forget what happened. We don't have to forget to move on from it."

"We don't?"

"We just have to make up for it."

"What?"

And so now George is standing when seconds ago he was sitting. Dream, too consumed by his own overthinking, didn't even notice him take those steps forward. There's nothing rushed as George's hand takes Dream by the jaw, fingers framing his chin, guiding Dream's mouth down to his.

It's the slightest of kisses. Nothing like before. Dream's eyes are wide in unblinking shock and George moves back slowly. Smiling so sweetly that it's not sweet at all. He wants to crash into George's orbit, create some supernova, and be burnt up in George's atmosphere. Anything he can get. He hesitates though, waiting for something to give.

Dream is lost in the brown of his eyes this close up and the way he can see each individual eyelash - not quite black. This close he sees in full detail the freckles and little blemishes that make George's face, he wants to kiss him all over.

"Is this okay?" George whispers and Dream can feel the air on his face. He's gone warm all over at the words. Something swooping in his stomach.

"Yes, yes." His brain is scattered and George's mouth upturns by another fraction, amusement dancing in his eyes. Dream's heart races.

"Then it works better if you help too." Dream can feel the words against his own mouth.

"Oh." Dream sighs and their lips connect for the first time, properly.

How foolish he was to compare George to gods. George is incomparable.

George leans into Dream and Dream sinks into his touch. It's messy, as most first kisses are. Not quite working until Dream tilts his head into it some more and lets himself relax against the careful glide of George's lips. He tastes of sweet tea, saccharine sweet, unforgettable. His hands have migrated to the back of Dream's neck, fingers threading into the hair there and holding Dream in place.

Dream is unsteady with the sheer weight of feeling, it breaks the kiss apart far too soon.

"You—" Dream's voice catches. There was probably a sentence in there to go with that word but it gets lost somehow. This is nothing like the first kiss in that airport. This is so much more tangible than anything Dream has ever experienced and that's just George, this immovable object in Dream's life. He's not going anywhere, he's here to stay.

Dream isn't that much broader, but he's taller and that extra mass should anchor him better to the spot. Yet he finds himself supported by the wall next to the window. Not exactly pressed into it but with George weighted against his front. Dream's chin tilted down, mouth hovering over George's. Coloured in that pink-purple light from the Orlando Eye, completely aglow with it.

"What?" George is smiling, mouth shining.

"George." He says instead, hopeful that it conveys enough meaning. Of everything he feels, everything he's still having trouble trying to say. He hopes it's enough. George's grin grows, he kisses Dream through it, their noses bumping at first, head tilting to fix it. This time Dream eases into action. His hands settling into George's shirt, stretching the cotton, a crash of lips and skin and cotton under Dream's fingers.

He's in disbelief, raw shock, as George's mouth moves against his. He gasps as the kiss deepens.

George making the move to slide his tongue into Dream's mouth. It's overwhelming. George kisses with the assured certainty of a man who knows what he wants. Dream lets George take this and run with it.

He doesn't ever want George to stop now that he knows what he can have, what this can be.

And he wants so much. For George against the sofa or the bed. To keep kissing his perfect mouth. The sofa is the closest. Dream takes initiative, guiding George by the shoulders to the furniture. Watching him fall back onto the cushions, eyes wide, smiling stupidly up at Dream. Dream just takes him in, the sharp line of George's jaw, cotton t-shirt dishevelled from Dream's fist, hair falling over his forehead. Staring up at Dream and waiting for whatever happens next.

"You're so perfect. Have I told you that yet? How fucking pretty I think you are." Words fall out of his mouth, this need to tell George exactly what he thinks of him. What he's wanted to say for so long.

And it's George's turn to be speechless.

Dream's cheeks burn red at his own boldness. "Sorry, I uh— yeah."

He lingers awkwardly for a few more seconds and doesn't know what to do with himself.

"Come here, idiot." George huffs and Dream can't say no to him. He slides onto the sofa and is crowded immediately, George settling over him, thighs on either side of Dream, sitting in his lap. He chokes on the shock of his desire. There's never been a more perfect sight. Dream takes George by the thighs and pulls him closer.

"I've been wanting to do this for so long." Dream's voice is shaky. Words somehow finding their way out of his mouth.

"How long?" George's gaze is hard set on him. Pupils blown wide.

Dream glances away, bashful. "You know how long."

"Yeah, but how long have you wanted to kiss me?" He's smirking, George is smirking. The stupid arrogant little shit.

"I don't know. Does it matter?" Dream huffs, amused and embarrassed.

"I want to know. It matters to me." And he says it into Dream's ear, voice low and right fucking there. His lips are actually brushing against Dream's cheek and the shell of his ear.

"Feels like forever." He admits with a swallow, eyes falling shut. "This feels like a fucking dream."

"Dream's dreaming." George grins, face pulling back so Dream can open his eyes and see all of it in his vision. Dream doesn't know how he can even stay snarky, because Dream's got head empty, George brain rot and he really, really can't think of anything else right now.

"Shut up." He huffs.

"How much do you dream about me Dream?" George is teasing him. He shifts his weight, leaning close again like he knows just how much he makes Dream nervous.

"Oh, you don't want to know the answer to that." Dream tells him sagely.

George goes wide-eyed. "Maybe not." His eyebrows raise. "Maybe?"

And Dream laughs, air forced out of his lungs, his chest rising and falling. "Whatever, you wouldn't be able to handle it."

"Really? I'm not the one obsessed with me."

"What?" Dream laughs at whatever this idiot, his idiot, is saying.

"You know what I'm saying, Dream. You know." George replies, vaguely, confidently. Nonsensically.

"Nothing you say ever makes any sense."

George looks at him long and slow. "Yeah..." He nods, still playing into whatever this bit is.

"Dumbass."

And because he's been wanting to do this for so long, Dream sits up properly, his hands come to cup George's face and brush against his cheeks. He swipes over George's bottom lip with his thumb. George's tongue flicks out, licking over it and Dream practically passes away.

He keeps having to remind himself that they've got time. That he can take this slow and not desperately crash himself into George as he wants to.

He starts to lean in, George starts speaking.

"Do you think we had to be best friends first? To get here?"

"Huh?" Dream just wants to kiss George again. His brain isn't working anymore. But George is looking at him, he wants an answer. Clearly expecting Dream to have one ready to go.

George smirks. The little shit is definitely doing this on purpose. "If we met now for the first time. Do you think anything would have worked out differently?"

Dream presses a quick kiss to George's chin, hovering close by, speaking his words into George's skin, hoping George takes the damn hint. "I don't know. Maybe we'd hate each other. Maybe it would be the exact same."

"And, what if we were acquaintances, you know? Could you imagine us ever not knowing each other how we do? Or being basically strangers."

Dream sighs, meeting George's eye.

That sounds like hell. Dream doesn't want to imagine a world without George in it. He frowns at the idea of it.

"I think. If you're in my life you're always going to have an impact, George. No matter what universe or timeline or multiverse we're in."

"Do you think there's a timeline where we hate each other?"

Dream can only feel amused by all these questions. What goes on in George's head that he thinks about things such as this so out of the blue?

"I dunno. There are too many variables. We always have to impact each other's lives in some way. Good or bad. That's more likely than a timeline where we're strangers."

"There could be timelines though, where we never meet."

"There could. But those would be worse than the evil Dream and George timelines."

"Okay. So what if we were evil together? That could be cool. We. . . murder people and stuff."

"What the hell George?" Dream laughs sharply. "Why would we murder anyone?"

"I don't know. It's an evil timeline. Maybe we get annoyed at Sapnap and kill him."

"He'd have to be with us, *get real*. If we're Evil George and Dream then Sapnap's got to be evil too." Dream scoffs.

"Yeah, until we murder him for being annoying." George rolls his eyes like, duh, obviously. Even though Dream inherently disagrees with that faulty logic.

"Shut up. we're not murdering Sapnap."

"I might. Would you help me cover it up?"

"I am not having a conversation about murdering Sapnap and helping you hide the body, nimrod."

"So... you're saying you would help?"

"George. You are impossible."

"Obtuse." George squints at him, simply to be an asshole.

"Idiot."

Dream kisses him then, to distract him from this stupid, dumb conversation. A flurry of motion as he pushes George back into the couch. A clash of teeth and the wet, hot bite of George's bottom lip. George's legs wrapped around him as he's pushed against the sofa. He wants George tousled and flushed and he gets it. George takes a gasping breath and Dream feels the shocky thrill of it in his stomach and down his spine.

Moving so George is now trapped beneath him, knees pushed apart. Not really much of a trap, since George is grinning up at him like this is exactly where he wants to be, Dream between his thighs and clearly enjoying every moment of it. That he's got Dream to take action against him.

Dream needs a moment to imprint this image in his brain.

"You think I'm pretty," George whispers, with an evil little chuckle.

"Shut up. You know you are, George." He sighs, head falling against George's cheek in defeat.

"Yeah, but you think I am."

"Okay?" Dream pulls back so George can see his defiant eyebrow raise.

"I think you're pretty, pretty too," George shrugs at him.

"Pretty, pretty?"

"Yeah, just a little bit I guess." George does this eye roll-sigh-combo like he's been forced to make this compliment. The charade is broken by the white flash of teeth as he looks up through his

eyelashes at Dream. Dream wants to lick over his teeth with his tongue. He might if he gets the chance after he's won this argument with George, of course.

"Okay, in your opinion." Dream establishes.

George snorts. "Now who knows how hot they are."

"So, you admit I'm hot?" Dream grins.

"I hate you."

"No, I don't think so." Dream takes his victory, smirking defiantly down at George.

And so of course George tugs at Dream's shoulders in an attempt to shut the dumb idiots gloating up with a kiss but Dream manages to slip, collapsing on top of George's chest with a not very manly shriek, their heads knocking together.

"What was that?" George cackles as Dream rights himself.

"That was your fault, if you didn't want me so much that would not have happened. Reign it in George, jeez."

George laughs loud in surprise, eyes crinkling shut. Dream can only blink in wonder.

"Think it's the other way around," George tells him. "You want me."

"Oh? Is that right?"

Dream moves towards him and they're so close he feels the air stop short in George's lungs as Dream's mouth takes him captive. Dream puts every inch of himself into it. For all the times he wanted to kiss George but didn't. Too many to count, mixed up with London streets, the warm light in George's kitchen, the smell of oranges and rain. Kissing with George's hands curling against him, pushing up into Dream's mouth.

And so after giving it all to George for a moment Dream pulls away. Lets George chase after him with a short whine. His mouth moving so he can press two chaste kisses to George's jaw. Irresistibly close to his mouth. Further down, he breathes against George's neck before he makes a move to press his mouth to it.

George feels lightheaded from the contact. All of his blood is rushing somewhere, somewhere that isn't his brain.

Dream moves carefully back, kisses him on his spit-slick lips once more, chaste and too quick before he's pulling back.

"Who wants who?" Dream whispers, voice gritty, against George's cheek. He flushes perfect red as Dream watches him. Green eyes full and set on George's mouth. George doesn't have a second to retort because Dream's lips are already back on his. Hungry with want and revelling in his victory.

With avid fervour, Dream's fingers slip into George's hair and George moves to meet him, pushing up so he can press against Dream as much as he wants.

Dream has other ideas, he smiles into their kiss, uses his weight to anchor George to the sofa, his hands travel down George's stomach, gripping the bottom of the t-shirt, brushing against his warm stomach. His hands sliding under with ease, gripping at George's waist, bold enough that George

gasps at the contact. Dream pulls the shirt off with his help, they throw it down onto the floor next to them.

Dream remembers George in London, the few times they changed in the same room. Getting glimpses at bare skin. Being so struck by the sight of it he could barely think, almost forgetting you couldn't stare at your best friend like that without reason. Wanting to see all of George but accepting what he could get.

Here he is now. George enthusiastically pliant beneath him, waiting for Dream to touch some more.

Dream does, fingertips grazing that soft skin of George's stomach and then kissing him there, following it with a line of kisses back up to George's jaw and to his mouth once more.

It's coming home, it's everything that Dream has been missing laid to rest.

George's mouth slides against his, a wet press of lips, his hands moving down Dream's hips grabbing at his thighs and pressing them as close as he can get, Dream can't help the breathless moan that leaves his mouth. It's too much and not enough.

"Want you so much Dream." George is breathless against him, voice hitting against his ear.

And Dream can't help but think of himself at home, before ever going to London. Weighed down by the secret he was keeping, George's voice in his ear was both a salve and fuel to the ache of his desire.

He remembers a time when the aircon was set too low, even for him. the chill of it making his toes go numb. His feet tucked under himself to try to stay warm so he didn't have to move and fix the cause of the issue.

He had been so bored, he was always bored then, something crawling under his skin. George MIA and Sapnap probably sleeping. His texts to both of them had sat unanswered.

There was always something he could be doing. Before London he was so productive, editing videos, streaming. And yet. . . there was idleness to his constant motion. Something akin to writer's block consumed him. As though he was stagnant in the water. With no clue how to fix the restlessness or the boredom. Orlando was unchanging as always, too hot outside and too cold in his bedroom, in his empty house.

He was in need of distraction, going stir crazy from overthinking. There was never a way to shut it off entirely. The best he could do was close it in a box and try to ignore it. Shove that box under his bed with the dust bunnies and long lost socks. But he knew, always, that it was there.

He had wondered, was always wondering, what George was doing. If he was even awake. Just getting up? In his apartment with his cat nearby. Was he still in bed? Hair sleep-mussed, relaxed with his brown eyes half shut and bleary. He'd check his phone with his eyelashes shadowing his cheeks as he blinked to stay awake.

How funny it is that Dream imagined himself there, lying next to George. He knows what it's like now of course. But he couldn't get the idea to leave his mind of what he'd do if he finally got what he desired.

Would he turn over and see up close those freckles that decorate George's nose? Would George let him bring a hand to his face, cup his jaw and press a thumb to those soft lips? In Dream's mind, he does. George smiling against them, lips stretching in a tired smile, a white flash of teeth peeking

through. Dream would try and imagine the feeling of it beneath his thumb. His cold fingers pressing carefully to his own lips. He remembers the liquid cool drip of the loneliness that seized him.

A call to George's phone gone unanswered. Waiting for his voicemail to kick in just so he could press the phone to his ear and hear that voice for a moment. Pretend George was there with him.

Here, now, in this hotel room, he knows exactly what George would look like, sound like. The only light that's coming in is through the window, purple-pink and breathtaking. Maybe it's just the way that it light shines on George's features that makes it so wonderful.

"What?" George's eyes dart across his face at this sudden loss of momentum. Concerned perhaps by Dream's stillness.

"I— I never thought this could happen."

"Me either. I didn't even think about it."

"You had no clue? About how you felt or how I felt?"

"No, when I finally realised, everything made sense. Like, oh yeah, that's why I think about you all the time and why sometimes I wanted to squeeze you really hard." George laughs at himself. "Do you know how when you see a really cute cat and you want to squish it?"

Dream giggles, eyes squinting shut at this stupid analogy. "You wanted to squish me?"

"No, dumbarse, I wanted to be near you and touch you I guess. And that was weird, or it felt weird in my head. I knew it wasn't a normal thing to want because it didn't feel like that with anyone else apart from you. Just didn't get it then."

"How do you feel now?"

"That it's never been anyone but you really. All this time we've known each other and I've finally caught up."

"You are a little slow on the uptake." Dream tells him, grinning like a madman.

"Oh shut up, you've probably been writing poems about me for fifty years or whatever."

"Well... no but I can definitely write you some if you're into that. *Oh, George! Roses are red, violets are blue, you suck so bad and I want to...* no never mind. Not going there." He bursts into an embarrassed wheezing laugh.

George has got one of his big smiles taking over his face. "I mean, come on, what were you going to say Dream? It's only me here."

"No, shut up. It was so dumb."

"You're lucky I'm into that," George tells him.

"Into what, me being stupid?"

"Yeah it's— what do they say?" George laughs at himself. "Moron- moronsexual? I'm like that for you."

"Okay. I'm moronsexual for you too then."

And then Dream decides enough is enough. To put an end to all this distracting talking and tell George some things that words just can't express. His hands slip to the button of George's pants, fingers curling under the fabric and touching at the skin of George's navel. George's eyes widen, inhaling sharply, sensitive to Dream's touch as the hand slips further under.

"Stop smiling like that." George pouts at him, his voice a few shades more raspy than usual.

Dream didn't even realise he was smiling. He feels it now, the tug at his cheeks. It's impossible to stop, George is gorgeous beneath him and he can't tear his eyes away.

"Stop looking like that then."

"Dream." George huffs, his face flushed. "Would you fucking hurry up and touch me before I die."

"Dramatic much."

"I haven't even told you yet have I?"

Dream's lying with George resting on his chest, hands in George's hair when George breaks the comfortable silence. Along the way, travelling from sofa to hotel bed, Dream has managed to lose the rest of his clothes.

"Told me what?" Dream asks, is it a normal thing to want to lick someone's eyebrow? He doesn't think so but he kisses George there anyway because he doesn't think he has yet.

"Dream." George gives him a look when he pulls away. God, Dream can't get over George looking at him in such a way. And the way George says his name, Dream knows exactly what it means.

"Oh," he whispers, voice scratchy, barely a noise at all.

"Do you want me to say it, now?" George is smiling, bright and dumb, all-encompassing.

"Please say it." He knows how he must sound, he doesn't care. He's long past embarrassing himself in front of George now.

George moves, knowing that Dream is waiting, watching.

George sighs for dramatic effect as though he's hard done by and it's taking all his effort to say this simple phrase. *"I love you."* God he's lucky Dream finds him so endearing as he smiles impishly afterwards, watching Dream's reaction.

And Dream can't handle it, it's too much, something is burning inside of him. He pulls George in, burying his face in George's hair and tries to remember how to breathe and then George goes and says it again, against where Dream's neck meets his shoulder. He feels lightheaded with love and wanting.

"George." Dream breathes out against his hair. George pulls him back into view.

"You're all red." George is teasing and his eyes are knowing, Dream hates it and loves him and it's all too much.

"I'm not." He manages.

"I love you Dream."

Dream collapses, boneless. George is evil, George is the absolute worst human being in existence. Something needs to be done to stop him. He can't keep getting away with this.

They wake up at some unknown time the next day and George is laying half under Dream There's no foggy unknown as awareness comes back to him. George knows straight away where and who he is with. It feels the same as London and yet not at all. Because George can reach out, run his fingers with delicate touch over the slope of Dream's nose, down his cheek, across the stretch of his jaw. Follow the path of resistant stubble down to Dream's throat where lies a barely-there shadow he probably hasn't had a chance to shave.

The difference is in now knowing he wants this, that this is something he can have.

His hand is captured while he's distracted and he watches it, taken into the clutches of Dream's grip. He presses the knuckles to his mouth. George inhales. Dream's eyes open slowly, heavy-lidded from sleep.

"Hi." Dream's voice is small and quiet. More a noise coming out of an uncleared throat, cracking on as little as this single-syllable word.

"Hello," George replies.

"What are we doing today?" His voice is rough like sandpaper. He pulls George's hand to his chest, where he keeps it there, his own hand wrapped around it.

"I don't know, your city, you're the tour guide. You tell me."

Dream laughs, a puff of air forced out of his nose. "Can't you come up with something?"

George just shrugs.

"Very helpful George."

"That's what they call me, Helpful George."

"Oh, yeah. Definitely."

"Glad we're in agreement."

Dream rolls his eyes, lazily pushes himself upright. Carefully letting go of George's hand. He searches the room with the turn of his head.

His hair is this perfect mess, the too-long waves ruffled, sticking up wildly. George doesn't have to imagine how it would feel under his fingertips, he knows it. Feather soft. Made for touching.

"Do you know where my phone is?" Dream turns.

"Probably in your pants."

"Do you know where my pants are?"

George grins.

"Shut up." Dream snorts and George is delighted.

"Didn't say anything."

"Okay."

Dream stretches with a yawn, chest tightening and relaxing, muscles shifting. When he's done making a show of himself, he asks: "Where's yours?"

"Wherever my clothes are."

"Helpful George, strikes again."

"He's a saint." George grins, Dream kisses his forehead for it and so George grins some more.

Then Dream is shoving away the sheets, standing upright. This is different to London. Dream's naked and George feels sheepish as though he shouldn't be looking. Even though he has seen

everything already. Dream looks back at George, the expression on his face so comforting and familiar that George's worries can just fall away, forgotten.

Dream finds a pair of underwear and pulls those on at least before he goes swanning around the room. Amused by the way George's eyes keep following after him. He collects last night's disregarded clothes. Disappearing into the other room before coming back, all of it, phone and clothes now in hand. He throws George's at the bed. Sets the pile of clothes at the end of it.

"It's later than I expected." Dream hums absentmindedly. George checks his newly acquired phone, it reads just after one in the afternoon.

"I need to go home, get some fresh clothes. Then we could do something." He stretches, blinking at George knowing he'd much rather just get back into bed.

"I don't feel like doing much. I could come to your house with you?"

"Sure, yeah. That sounds good."

Getting ready takes longer than expected. First Dream has to use one of the little disposable toothbrushes the hotel provides. This didn't take long to decide. But there was this whole argument before they found the eco-friendly bamboo brush provided, where Dream tried to convince George to let him use his toothbrush. Which, *so gross*.

Clearly, Dream is an insane person and George needs to rethink his life choices.

Dream had tried to argue that the things in his mouth had already been in George's and George actually considered leaving back to England and never speaking to Dream again.

Anyway, they brush their teeth side by side, pulling faces at each other in the mirror. Dream starts something he won't be able to finish when he jabs George in the side, repeatedly, leaping out of the way when George attempts to retaliate. All the while a toothbrush sticking out of his grinning, dumb mouth. Eyes widening when George's hands follow after him.

George has to spit into the sink. "You will die." So very menacing in his boxers with minty foam stuck to the corner of his mouth.

Dream finds he has no choice but to kiss it away.

"See, might as well have shared toothbrushes." He tells George after kissing him thoroughly. Clearly so very amused with himself. George wants to punt him into the sun. He kisses Dream again, and will definitely punt later.

They end up using the entirety of the hotel's hot water in the shower. George yelping in surprise when the temperature changes from perfectly warm to freezing cold and Dream laughs himself breathless as they retreat to the safety of the tiled floor, rushing to get wrapped in towels. George has to catch Dream, too busy laughing to pay attention and stay balanced. Managing to slip across the wet surface of the bathroom floor and almost break something. George is the only thing keeping him upright.

"My knight in shining towel." Dream quips.

"Shut up." And George kisses him into the counter, which successfully stops Dream laughing at his own dumb joke. Something George will forever remember he has the power to do.

Dream ends up wearing one of George's t-shirts with his own worn jeans from yesterday, carefully

checked over for marks or stains. Dream takes his time sorting through them, despite George's t-shirts being basically all the same with the odd logo on the front if he's feeling fancy.

He settles on a black one he wants, it's nice and baggy, old enough that the cotton is worn thin.

"Wow, great choice." George, who had watched this unfold, says dryly.

Dream pulls a face at him, being very mature and respectable.

They get out of the room, making a decision to leave George's things here for now, even if he does end up staying at Dream's anyway. They can just come back, he is paying for the room after all.

Taking the elevator down to the ground floor and heading to the car, they settle close in one another's space. Not holding hands or anything quite so intentional, but shoulder to shoulder. Close enough that some part of them is touching. Different to London, George's brain reminds him, thinking of bumping shoulders as they walked the streets to keep up with each other.

And though Dream isn't sure he was supposed to park in the hotel lot overnight without a permit, he doesn't have a ticket. They count it as a win.

There's nothing that much different about being with Dream before and now. They still talk dumb shit and George still argues pettily. Dream with enough bullshitting confidence to always think he's right. They still call each other idiot fondly and Dream gives him these long looks afterwards. Those have always been there. George remembers because he started trying to catalogue Dream facial expressions in London (there are too many to count it turns out, an impossible task) he recognises this one and it's *oh, so we've always been on our way here*.

In the car, Dream lets George pick the music even though the driver always picks. Because they like the same things and even when they don't Dream would listen to whatever George wanted, just to understand him a little more. Songs he never thought he'd enjoy become favourites that way. George talks shit about America again and Dream bullies him about the UK. Differences lie in George putting his hand on Dream's knee, sliding up his thigh at a stoplight and kissing his cheek just to watch him get flustered. Because George knows Dream will try to get revenge at some point later. He's counting on it.

"I almost told you when we were in that place, Camden?" Dream is saying while George scrolls through his Spotify to queue up some songs to play.

"The shop with all the lights?" George looks over, Dream's hands are on the wheel, glancing at George whenever he can.

"Yeah. I swear to god if we stayed there a second longer I might have." His hand flexes on the wheel. Interesting. George blinks.

"I loved that day. Remember—" And George breaks in laughter, he drops the phone back into the cupholder between them. There's a Travis Scott song playing that makes Dream glance at him fondly. "Remember the ice cream?"

Dream's face morphs into shocked remembrance. "That was your fault! I still haven't forgotten that you owe me, by the way."

"Yeah, yeah. I'll buy you one. Whatever. But you should have seen the look on your face." George cackles again.

"You've only told me a thousand million times." Dream rolls his eyes.

"You looked like you'd been told someone died!"

"I dropped my ice cream! I was looking forward to eating that and you didn't even let me have any of yours when you knocked it out of my hand! So rude. I can't believe you wouldn't share."

"I let you have some. It was my ice cream!"

"Yeah, a single, pathetic lick. That is nothing George."

"I told you to go buy another." George shrugs, he has no remorse at all. Teasing Dream is where he gets his kicks after all.

"No. That's way too embarrassing."

"Why? No one would have cared!"

"Because I'm not an eight-year-old girl who dropped her ice cream all over the floor. I'm a man, we man-up and accept it for what it is." He straightens his shoulders to exaggerate, George catches the curl of a smile at the corner of his mouth.

"So why are you whining? Like a baby?" George argues.

"Shut up. You're a baby."

George laughs at the frowny huff Dream exhales and the way he turns up the song in retaliation. Keeping his eyes on the road for a good ten seconds before he glances back at George again.

Dream's house stands in the same spot it did last time, though George still gets it confused with half the other houses on the street. Dream looks at him carefully as they step through the door.

"This is it." Dream looks back.

"Cool." George steps past, the first interior doorway leads to the kitchen. He walks through knowing Dream is watching. Idiot makes a big deal out of everything.

"I was so used to your kitchen, when I got home I almost forgot where everything was." Dream admits quietly. It doesn't sound true, you can't forget where everything you own is, realistically. George thinks he understands feeling out of place in your own home though. His flat felt so much different with Dream gone that it became hard to remember that there was a time before Dream at all.

"The plant on my windowsill," George remembers all at once as he's staring at the kitchen sink. "Did you water it?"

"You clearly weren't." Dream ducks his head, looking past George then back to him then back to the kitchen again.

"I forgot. There were more important things to think about." George says.

"It's in plain view, George. I don't understand how you could forget." Dream looks at him properly now.

"Too busy thinking about you in my bed, to be honest."

Dream's eyes widen, George reddens, not knowing how to clarify what he meant without saying something dumb. So they stand awkward and silent like the two emotionally numb idiots they are.

As shy as teenagers on a first date.

"Don't you think it's funny how we slept in the same bed for that long, but like, nothing happened," George says eventually because reverting to his teenage self is not something he, or anyone else, needs in their life. Teenage George was the worst.

"Well, I don't know. Do you wish something did?" Dream asks.

"Obviously I do now. But then, we both had shit we needed to figure out first."

"Obviously." Dream echoes.

George wonders how he didn't see it in London because Dream's love is loud and reckless. He reacts to George's words as though he is a man drowning in them.

They drink the orange juice from Dream's fridge, it's not quite sharing an orange slice by slice but it works. Dream drinks from George's glass and complains that apple juice is superior. He's not wrong but George doesn't want to talk about the semantics of orange juice versus apple juice right now.

"Do you think it would be weird if we went live right now?" Dream looks at him brightly, the idea clearly just coming to him.

"What?" George asks, uncertain.

"After what happened. And now you're here with me." Dream explains.

"Who cares. We don't owe anyone anything." George reminds him, because he thinks Dream needs to hear it often otherwise he'll overshare everything to the entirety of the internet hoard.

"It's hard sometimes, I think people expect it. Want to know everything that we do." He's fiddling with the bottom of George's shirt absently, rolling the hem between his fingers.

"Sure." George shrugs, aware already. "Don't have to give them the reasons we do things though. Keep them guessing."

"You're mean."

George shrugs and yet Dream can't help but agree. Keep them guessing.

[A Tumblr post appears, not long after a livestream from *dreamwastaken*. Dream and George playing Bedwars, both of them in Florida.]

dreaminggeorge:

Anonymous said

↳ *are you watching dream's stream right now? dream and george are together,, in Florida,, being incredibly soft and cute and giggly. i need to know your thoughts!*

↳ AAAAHHH!!! I've only just finished work! Then I saw this ask waiting in my inbox. I've missed so so much! Watching the vod as we speak dearest anon! If the posts on my dash are anything to go by, holy shit!

#insane #dream and george are a social experiment with the sole intention of making me go bonkers #watching the vod rn #not ten minutes in and #did george just say that dream snores in his sleep?? #yes he did #what the fuck george #what the fuck is going on #hello???? someone check i'm not dreaming #there is going to be a whole post soon #i'm writing notes out #putting more work

into this than my overdue school assignments #ask tag #dnf #dreamnotfound

—4 notes

SAPNAP

bro can we finally play Minecraft pleaseeeeeee

GEORGE

No

SAPNAP

WTF

GEORGE

Dream thinks he can beat u at chess if u want to play?

SAPNAP

LMAOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO OKAY SUUUURE

SAPNAP

drm still live?

no

give me a sec

k

i'm about to own that little bitch

He says ur going to lose

HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA

never laughed so hard in my damn life

yo answer

stop making out with dream and answer my fucking call asshole

Shut Up

;) make me

L

SAPNAP

STOP HANGING UP

GEORGE

Whoops, my hand slipped :]

SAPNAP

STOP

GEORGE

Say ur sorry

SAPNAP

i'm sorry

GEORGE

As u should be.

SAPNAP

that you're such a little bitch

GEORGE

Wrong thing to say :/

SAPNAP

what are you going to do about it HUH??

GEORGE

The cowboy pic.

SAPNAP

u wouldn't

GEORGE

I would.

SAPNAP

that is The Worst picture

GEORGE

Naah I have much worse. That's just the start of it

SAPNAP

whatever. shut up. just answer the call.

GEORGE

Better have your apology ready

SAPNAP

I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT U WANT ME TO APOLOGISE FOR??? IT WAS SO MINUSCULE I'VE ALREADY FORGOTTEN

"Dream, your boyfriend is a dumb little bitch and I'm going to kill him." The words are as immediate as the call connecting. Dream looks at George, eyebrows raised to his hairline.

"Well, you're not. But okay." Dream says, giving George a quizzical look.

"You're the one being annoying!" George exclaims, ignoring Dream's expression.

"Me! You're the one threatening to post bad pictures of me for no goddamn reason!" Sapnap yells.

Oh, Dream snorts. That explains it.

"Which photo?" He has to ask, there are too many possibilities.

"The cowboy picture." George and Sapnap speak at the same time. Sapnap sounds in pain and George is gleeful.

Dream laughs loudly. "George, that is an awful picture. You aren't posting that anywhere." The picture he's referring to captures a much younger Sapnap beaming at the camera in full cowboy getup, a lasso in his hands. Taken by his stepmom. Shared with his friends because he trusted them and thought they'd appreciate the insight into what young Sapnap was like. He now knows his mistake, is haunted by this error he has made. George is evil, sadistic, could and would make a grown man cry.

"He's the one who antagonised me!"

"He's the one who antagonised me!" Sapnap mimics George's whine. *"Shut up!"*

"Can we just play chess? The two of you are as bad as each other." Dream sits back in his chair, glancing at George, a long-suffering look on his features.

"Not true." George defends quickly.

"Yeah, George is way worse!"

"Stop!" They'll go on forever if he doesn't bring it to an end now. "Sapnap, join the game already. You two have spent way too long being annoying."

"Okay. George can't help you though!" Sapnap adds quickly, they hear the clicks of his keyboard as he types.

"I know." George rolls his eyes, then turns to Dream. "I can't wait to see Dream lose to you."

"Thanks." Dream says dryly and George just stays smirking.

"I think that was an unintentional compliment. George thinks I'm better than you Dream, hah!"
Sapnap gloats.

"Yeah and I'm proving you both wrong. Just wait." Dream cracks his knuckles, rolls the chair front and centre to his monitors. George sitting right next to him, rubbing his hands together and so clearly revelling in this. His eyes bright, biting his lip as his eyes flick between the monitor and Dream. Never once telling Dream what to do but clearly amused by all of his choices.

Inevitably, Dream loses and George and Sapnap crucify him, loudly, insultingly and through winding laughter. Dream is bad at chess, George is lucky he's pretty and Sapnap is pleased that life will continue as it always has. With Dream and George being sickeningly cute and him the begrudging friend who secretly adores them.

He dreams of a man in porcelain mask. You know the rest. Pale-blue ribbon. Golden-brown hair. Green cloak, fallen hood. Shining armour. An axe that gleams. The same as it always is.

Air so still and heavy it feels like wading through sweet sticky syrup. A place that's not quite physical, that may be a field or a house or nothing at all.

A man that is surely Dream. Mask poorly repaired, imposing smile off-centre.

But this time, through the heavy fog, they step forward together. Impossible fog it must be because despite it being so thick that the whole world is nothing around them, Dream and George are in perfect focus.

In steady asynchrony, they draw near. George first then Dream.

Dream's bare hands stretch forth, which is odd. With all the armour he is wearing George thought

they would be gloved.

George's hands reach out to meet them halfway, he has little hesitation about it. He knows the calloused curl of those bony fingers, the soft palm, scar on the side of Dream's right thumb - a small pale sliver from an incident long ago. And this time. Dream's hands guide George's up to the delicate mask that covers his face.

A weighted presence, hand sliding to wrist once George's warm touch makes contact with the cold porcelain edge. A gesture that is reassuring. And so George knows the intention. He reaches around for the ribbon, taking care to be gentle with the golden hair that may be caught in his grip as he pulls it free. Lets the mask fall into his hands and fall away, George may drop it in the fog but it hits no ground. As soon as it is out of his hand it seemingly disappears.

Here is the face of a man he knows. Smiling at him, eyes creased by the weight of his grin. One of the smile's he has when caught in a memory, laughing at something that George once said.

His fingers slide in their grip so they are touching George's, palm to palm.

He doesn't need to fall this time.

George wakes up. Dream's hand is tracing circles against his skin, his face pressed into the nape of George's neck. It can't be comfortable to lay like that for so long. But Dream doesn't seem concerned at all.

Part of George is still without understanding. Part of him hoped coming to Orlando would make it finally clear. It doesn't. The words and things he feels don't suddenly fit like the last puzzle pieces.

He's not good at filing through his emotions, would rather not think about them all too much. But he's trying his hardest to be open now. He came to Orlando because he needed this as much as Dream did. With Dream now, it's no more defined. But it's easier, it's safe here where he knows Dream feels just as bewildered by all this.

That they can pull this apart as carefully as they want to with as much time as it may take.

Chapter End Notes

chapter song — i wanna be yours by arctic monkeys

SO THIS IS THE END! WOW OKAY! THIS IS FINE!!!

How do you end things? Do I say goodbye? Do I just leave out the back door? Idk what you want from me.. I will say thank you very much for reading and going through all this with me. I've enjoyed myself too much lmao. I hope you have enjoyed it too.

The playlist is complete!!!

ft. extra songs added to the end.

These songs are all just my messy taste and I'm sure there will be a few duds for you guys, but I absolutely love playlists and listening to them. It's a great opportunity to find new songs and artists! If any of you come away from listening to this with even

one new song you like I will have done my job! <3

Also do not be afraid to recommend any of your own songs! I am constantly searching for new favourites.

Enjoy! <3 Link [here!](#)

Again, THANK YOU! Insane how much love this fic has been given and I'm so so grateful <3

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!